

YOUR GUIDE TO LUNKER CATCHES

SPOONPLUGGING

KNOWLEDGE ...
IS THE
KEY
TO FISHING
SUCCESS

E. L. "BUCK" PERRY
"THE DADDY OF STRUCTURE FISHING"

FRANKOWIAK

WHAT THEY SAY . . .

JOE STEARNS

Sports Feature Writer

"When Buck Perry caught 30 bass on 30 casts at Georgia's Soap Creek Camp, I was there to see it."

LOU GALE

Cleveland Plain Dealer

"When the fish don't bite, and the guide says you should have been here yesterday, pull out your Spoonplug and go find the fish."

GEORGE X. SANDS

Writer & Photographer,

American Rod & Gun

"Ever since Homo Sapiens first tossed a bait into water suspected of containing fish, his basic problem has remained unchanged; namely, how to be assured of catching them when you want to catch them."

Since that fateful day of the fisherman has seen the lie put to dozens of "sure-fire" methods of accomplishing this. He has sadly discovered that regardless how he may go about it, whether he revert to live bait or dead, drifting, jugging, hand line, trot lines, set lines, trolling, cane pole, bait or fly casting, spinning or what have you . . . he is still going to catch fish only when they happen to be "biting".

Today, however, there has emerged from the ranks of such persecuted a soft-spoken North Carolinian, a one-time high school physics teacher, who has changed all this. His name is Elwood "Buck" Perry."

GRITS GRESHAM

Writer & TV Personality

"Buck's researching on Spoonplugging has forced a revision of most of our prior concepts of bass behavior. He has made a significant contribution to fisheries research, not to mention his contribution to the hard-working and often fishless angler."

BILL BINKELMAN

Editor, Fishing News

"Buck Perry has made it possible for more people to catch more trophy fish than perhaps anyone who has ever lived. Buck's great discoveries on fish habits—the 'schooling' nature of big fish, migrations, sanctuaries and the cold front, just to name a few—have opened a new era for anglers."

RAY BERGMAN

Fishing Editor, Outdoor Life

"A few months ago I would have said that anyone who claims he can always catch bass is either crazy or just bragging. I'll listen politely now, it may be true."

GEORGE RAMSEY

Writer, Western Outdoors

"Elwood 'Buck' Perry, the self-confessed farm boy from Hickory, North Carolina, has continued to turn my fishing world topsy-turvy with theories that I do not agree with . . . then takes me fishing and makes me eat crow by proving that they aren't theories but fact!"

YOU TOO CAN CATCH FISH LIKE THIS



SPOONPLUGGING

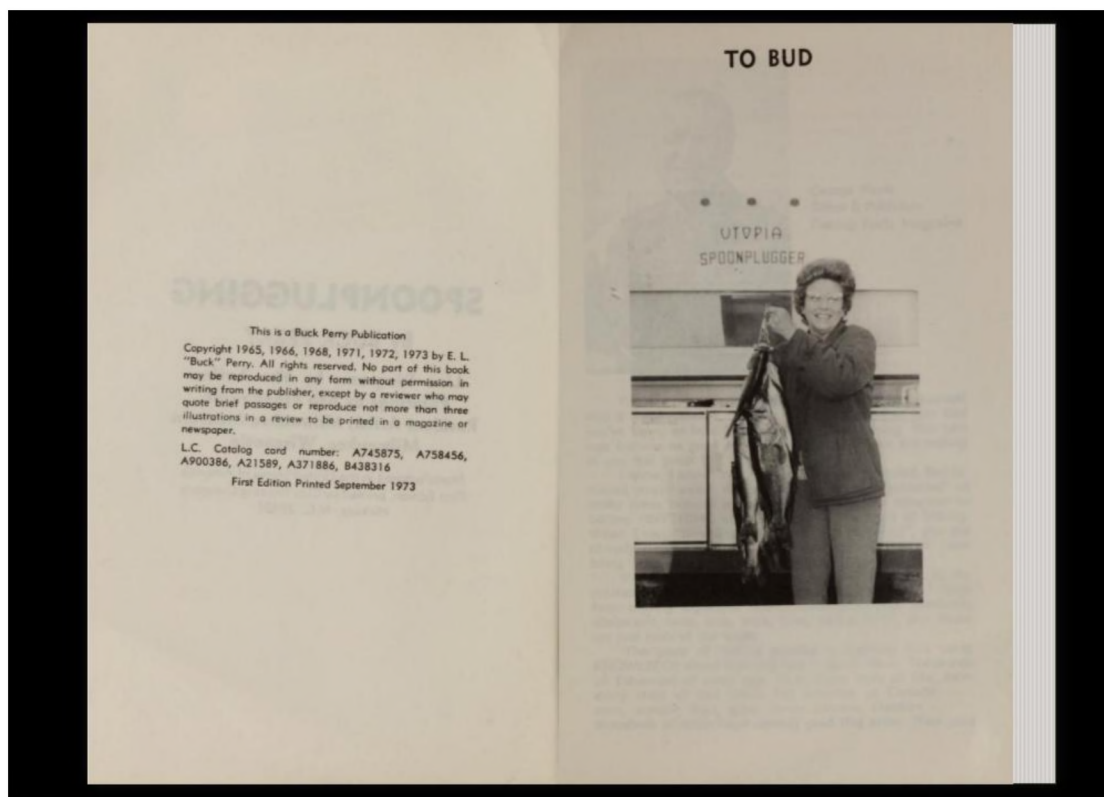
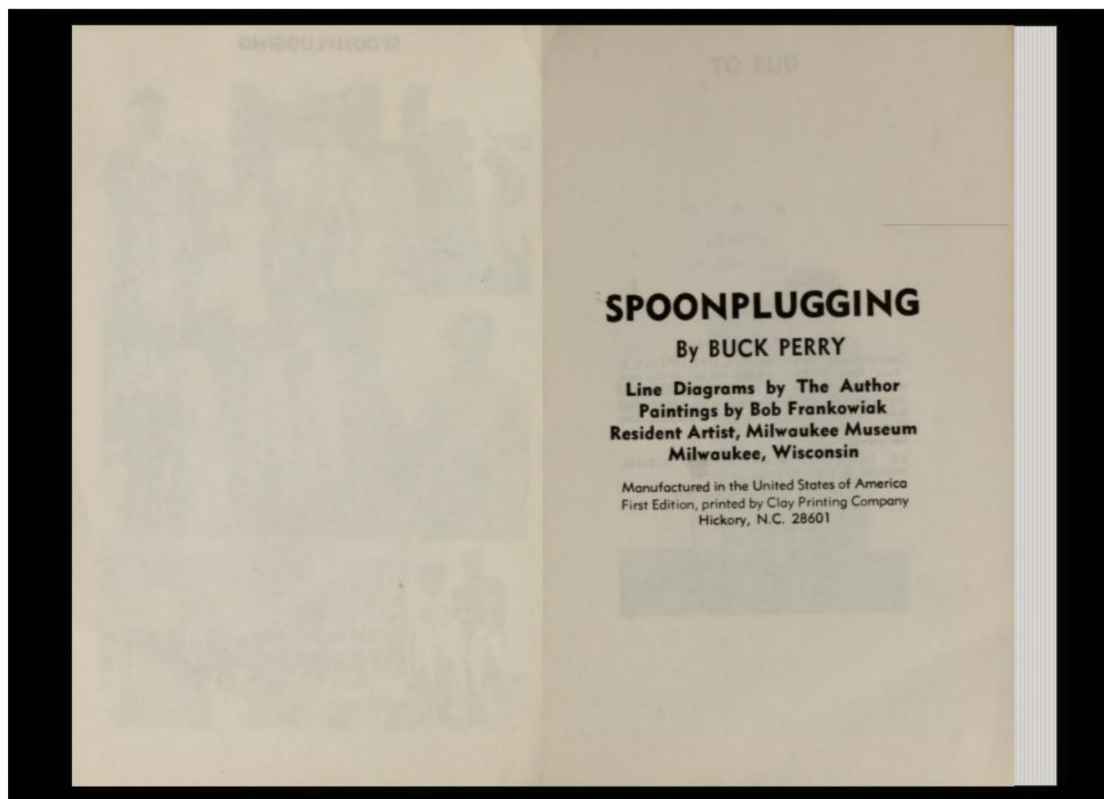


SPOONPLUGGING

BY BUCK PERRY

Book Copyright © The Author
 Foreword by Bill Binkelman
 Foreword by Ray Bergman
 Foreword by George Ramsey

Published by the author of Spoonplugging
 First Edition, 1968. Second Edition, 1970
 Printed by [illegible]





George Pazik
Editor & Publisher
Fishing Facts Magazine

You now hold in your hands the power to **change yourself** into a great fisherman. Never mind how good or how bad you've been, or how long you have been fishing. You can now become **as good as you want to be**, IF you are willing to pay the price.

I know, I know. You have been conned, cheated, lied to, misled, misinformed, defrauded, swindled and "suckered" so many times over so many years that you are reluctant to believe ANYTHING when it comes to the sport of fishing. When I say, "IF you are willing to pay the price", you are already suspicious. Good, you should protect yourself from being "had" again. Be alert for what comes next.

What IS the price of fishing success? It cannot be expressed in money, it cannot be purchased. It doesn't come from owning expensive boats, powerful motors, electronic equipment, lures, rods, reels, lines, tackle boxes, etc., these are just tools of the trade.

The price of fishing success is learning and using KNOWLEDGE about fish and how to catch them. Thousands of fishermen of every age, from every walk of life, from every state of the union and province of Canada men, women, boys, girls, senior citizens, children . . . thousands of them have already paid this price. They paid

it willingly, even eagerly, and they are now catching fish as never before in all their lives. They paid the price, yes, but now the price is even less than what they paid. How can that be?

This book never **existed** before. Never, until now, has the Father of Modern Fishing put so much of his knowledge together in one place and at one time. The man of whom I speak is a soft-spoken genius from Hickory, North Carolina; a genius whose name is E. L. (Buck) Perry; a man I am privileged to call Teacher and Friend. This is the man whose discoveries and principles of successful fishing started our modern era of angling. They have been accepted, but seldom clearly understood, by thousands of fishermen who have never even heard his name. The thousands of successful fishermen who have already learned Perry's principles had to learn them the hard way, because Buck Perry was never popular with the great masses of fishermen. His discoveries clashed with the old tales about fishing that we grew up on.

How lucky we fishermen are that over thirty years ago a Physics Professor at North Carolina State decided to forsake the academic world and devote his mind and his life to learning the truths of fishing success. Although honored by a few men with vision, Buck Perry has mostly been ignored, scorned, laughed at, ridiculed and even punished down through the years for his discoveries about the basic nature of game fish and how they can be caught by hook and line.

Now it all changes. Buck has now set down in print for future generations of sport fishermen, some of his accumulated knowledge about fish and fishing. I stress the word "some", because there is still a great deal more inside that brain of his that will come to us in future writings, correspondence courses, fishing classes, slides, movies, cassette tapes, etc. It is my fervent hope that the good Lord will grant Buck Perry the strength and the longevity to complete these tasks so that his great knowledge will not be lost to us fishermen.

That greatest of all books, The Holy Bible, both in Old Testament and New Testament, has transformed the lives of millions of people down through many centuries the people who were willing to read and believe and use it.

It is not my wish to be irreverent, but in its own humble way, this book by Buck Perry is a bible of fishing. It will transform **your** fishing life if you will but read and believe and use it.

Don't be so foolish as to think that fishing in **your** part

of this continent is different from fishing in other parts. The basics are the same everywhere. Fishing to catch fish is the same all over.

A fish is a simple creature, endowed by the Creator with a very small brain, who is always at the mercy of the environment in which he finds himself. He must spend his life in water. His body must be the same temperature as that of the water in which he swims. He has the **same** instincts, the **same** needs, the **same** reaction to conditions of weather and water, **NO MATTER WHERE HE IS FOUND**. Although there are minor differences between different species, all game fish have the same basic reactions to the conditions that affect the water in which they live. When you grasp this, you will start to understand the magnitude of Perry's discoveries and what they can mean to YOU in your beloved sport of fishing.

We of the Twentieth Century are notorious for not reading and following the instructions that come with our automobiles, our appliances, our gadgets and our fishing equipment. If you are one of those who refuse to **ever** read and follow instructions, this book will be worthless to you. Put it down and hand it back to the clerk in the store, or put it back on the shelf. If you received it through the mail, return it for your money back. It will be as useless to you as a Bible which has never been opened. Read no further.

If, however, you are determined to achieve some degree of success in your chosen sport of fishing, read on. If you are willing to pay the price of reading, learning, and **using** what you have learned my fishing friend, your fishless days are over!

If your mind is open and your brain is clear, and you are willing to look beyond the rubbish pile of fishing misinformation you've been handed all these years well, then, you are ready to begin reading this book. Mark down the date on your calendar. This is the first day of the rest of your life of successful fishing.

George



"BUCK SEZ"

In March, 1928, I turned to my Daddy and said, "Dad, you know, **the deep water is the home of the fish.**"

He didn't make a comment, but he sorta rolled his eyeballs around at me, as he made a cast within inches of a root.

The above remark was made as we were fishing a large Carolina mountain reservoir. By today's standards, it was a virgin lake in every respect. It was loaded with fish, no pollution, no other fishermen on the lake, and the water skier hadn't been invented yet.

We had been fishing for several hours, with no results. It was a beautiful day; clear sky, nice cool breeze blowing, water clear and pure enough to drink — by all standards, a perfect day to go fishing.

As we left the lake later, with empty stringers, Dad made some comment about the 'fish not biting' and suggested that we get some new lures before going fishing again. Several days later we went back to the lake, to see if the fish had decided to bite. This time, after throwing everything in the tackle box, with no success, I said; **"Not only is the deep water the home of the fish, but they move on PATHS toward the shallow water. How far they come and how long they stay is controlled by the weather and water conditions. Dad — we're not only fishing wrong, but we're in the wrong place."**

This outburst, DID get a reaction, he said, "If you don't stop making those crazy statements, I'm going to throw you in the lake!"

HE SET THE PATTERN FOR THE NEXT 45 YEARS.

Later I explained to him why I had made those statements. I told him I had for some time noted the opinions of the so-called experts, as to the why's and wherefores of fishing. In most cases, no two opinions were the same. I could see that most were 'hand-me-downs', and the rest would not stand up under the slightest scientific scrutiny. It had dawned upon me, that since there were so many ideas floating around about what made a fish tick, and what was necessary to catch him; probably NOBODY had the right answers. So — I had started to look into the situation.

I told him I had been looking in the water for a pretty long time. Some days I would see scads of fish swimming around. But most of the time I didn't see many or none at all. Since the fish didn't go up in the woods and hide behind a tree, they had to be in deep water.

I also told him, it soon became obvious that the fish I DID see, were in the areas where we had caught fish, the so-called "hot spots". Although it would be natural for me to look in these spots, I had also looked in other spots at the same time. It didn't take me long to see I was wasting my time in the other areas — if I expected to see fish. Why would this be? There was only one conclusion — **the fish were following a path.**

I had noticed also, the fish didn't show up at these spots all the time. Some days I would see a few, at other times none. Then all of a sudden, I'd see a big bunch of them. What caused this? Other animals reacted to weather, so why should a fish be any different?

At that time, I had no idea what a path looked like or what caused the fish to take that particular route. Neither did I know what weather and water conditions affected the fish, nor in what way. BUT, by the time I had finished school, I had all the loose ends gathered up on **basics**. I had also decided what I must DO, to catch him consistently. Then it was only a matter of proving them **FACTS**, by working many waters, under many conditions. This I did.

During this investigation, I soon found out there was no short-cut to fishing success. I could never go down to the store and buy success in a fancy wrapped package, or box. I also soon found out, that I would never be able to call myself a fishing **EXPERT**. Because, **the KEY to fishing success is KNOWLEDGE**. I would never get to the point I couldn't get more knowledge, and that I could always get better at my fishing. There was no way, that I could ever make the claim I was a Master at this fishing game.

KNOWLEDGE is what this book is all about. Knowledge that is not known by the majority of fishermen, and **FULLY** known by only a few. The purpose of this book is to help you become just as good a fisherman as you desire - if you put forth some time, study and effort.

This book is the **BASICS** of what makes a fish tick, and what you must do to catch him consistently. It is not like most fishing books. It does not contain subjects such as; how to cast, different types of fishing gear, knot tying, how to mount a bait on a hook, how to start a motor, row a boat, and possible methods for pulling lures or bait through the water, etc.

A fish is a fish, is a fish. He is no different in the north, south, east or west. He is no different in a pond, lake, stream or reservoir. He has a pea sized brain, and never had an original thought in his life. He can't 'size' up a

situation and measure any consequences of his action. What he does, he does despite himself. If he ever does any **THINKING** — it's after I get him on the stringer.

The material in this book will open up fishing horizons you never dreamed possible. No water or any type lake or reservoir, will cause you concern. You will feel perfectly at home on any water. You will know what to look for, and how to go about it. Every lake will be a new challenge.

A **GOOD** Spoonplugger will reach the point where he can walk up to a strange body of water — be it a natural lake or a man-made reservoir — observe the terrain, note the water color, check the weedline, study the weather and come up with most of the answers **BEFORE** he ever wets a hook. **AFTER** he gets on the water, little time will be lost before he is doing the right things in the right places.

This book is a **TEXT**. It should be read and studied as such. There is repetition on the more important points. I have tried to make each section as complete as possible, for repeated study on a particular subject, without additional reference.

Lots of the material may not make sense until you have had the actual experience on the water, so it is important, that you study and restudy the book.

At an early age I vowed that if ever I found out anything about fish; that if I ever talked or wrote about fishing, it would be from one definite approach — **I WOULD NOT QUOTE FROM A FISHING LIBRARY, NOR WOULD I EVER PUT DOWN AS FACT ANYTHING THAT I HAD NOT FOUND OUT FOR MYSELF, NOR EXPERIENCED ENOUGH TIMES TO BE JUDGED AS FACT.**

My associates, friends, and those who have followed my fishing and teachings can vouch for the fact that the observations and conclusions I have made are mine alone, and are not the writings or observations of someone else. For many years I have refrained from reading outdoor magazines or books on the subject of fishing.

By stating the above, I do not mean that I have not had some help from friends and fellow fishermen. Many have worked with me in arriving at a final conclusion. Many hours have been spent in discussion on the merits of an observation or working on a problem. Through the years, I have repeatedly compared notes with great fishermen like Don Nichols and John Buoy. They have helped me so many times through the years in adding to my knowledge by presenting problems to be solved, and helping me to solve them. There are others, such as Terry O'Malley, who

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have given of their time in tying down a particular subject. But, in no case have I expressed the opinions of others, nor drawn a conclusion unless I had experienced it, tested it fully, or until I was completely sure in my own mind that it was sound.

I COULD PUT SEVERAL DIFFERENT NAMES OF LAKES, RESERVOIRS, STREAMS, SLOUGHS, PONDS, ETC., TO EACH AND EVERY SUBJECT, SITUATION AND ILLUSTRATION USED IN THIS BOOK. I have covered a lot of water in the last 30 years. You can rest assured the material in this book came "straight from the horses mouth".

As stated, this book is only the **Basics**, or the first step in Fishing Knowledge. There is much, much more, but experience has shown fishing knowledge cannot and should not, be obtained in one big chunk. It is no different from any other "schooling" . . . first things first. The material in this book is the **FIRST** knowledge that must be fully accepted and understood, before going on to more detail and advanced study.

This does not mean that you have to have advanced study to catch fish. **If you 'get' the material in this book, you will start catching fish like you never dreamed.** Your fishing education is a never ending thing, you will get better and better. Each satisfying catch will create a desire to gain more knowledge.

The gaining of additional knowledge is the reason why the more detailed and expanded Correspondence Courses will be offered. This is one of the reasons why Spoonplugville, Tennessee is being built with its Fishing Museum and Fishing Institute. Here the ultimate in Fishing Education will be available . . . to the young, the old, the beginner and the advanced. It is here, for the first time, a great need will be fulfilled (I hope) — the training and direction of our (fishing) writers.

Whatever phase of fishing education you find yourself, it is wise to see what others say. I highly recommend your monthly reading, study, and enjoyment of George Pozik's Fishing Facts — a magazine dedicated to help you become a better fisherman. If not a subscriber, I urge you to write (P.O. Box 4169 Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53210) and have your name added to his subscription list. You'll be glad you did.

I've been condemned through the years due to the fact I sold lures. Funny thing about this, most of it come (or comes) from those whose existence, and well being, is predicated on the fishermen of the country accepting the things in this book. Maybe in the final analysis it wasn't due to

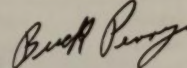
my selling lures, but due to the fact I could catch a fish, or to the fact I was "first", or to the fact my stuff contradicted everything he had (or has) been preaching. Quite often people will do or say things to try and justify their acts, but I never have been able to figure out why my selling lures should have a bearing on my reception. I suppose, I was expected to do my work in **FISHING** and then peddle some **POPCORN** (so I could "eat") — **I'd never have gotten the first fisherman to listen to a word I said.** Besides, I never sold lures — I sold tools.

I am profoundly grateful for those who have accepted Spoonplugging, and especially for the friends it has produced.

I want to thank **all** the Spoonpluggers for their interest and help over the years. Especially to Don and Marge Nichols, John Buoy, Tom Coleman, and Terry O'Malley, for their friendship, and for being such great fishing partners. This book would have been incomplete without the fine paintings of Bob Frankowiak. No less thanks to Carrie Sue Brown, Gracie Lee Mull, and Bertha Beal for their years of dedicated service. Without their help, I'd be "dead".

A special thanks to George Pozik. And finally, I want to dedicate the whole of Spoonplugging to Bud, my wife, who tended the store while I was away assembling the material contained in the books, schools and correspondence courses. She was the one that made it all possible.

Good fishing,



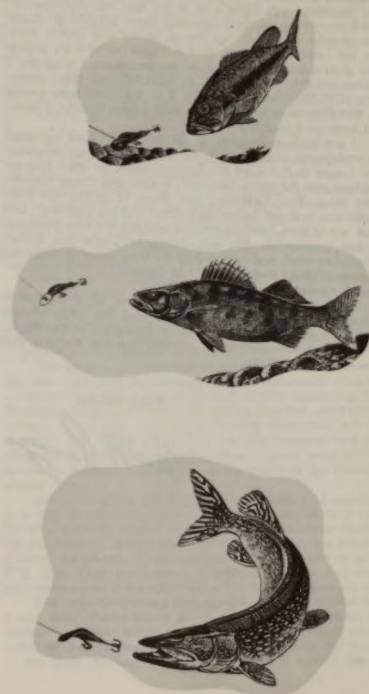


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On the date mentioned above I was fishing with my Daddy. We had beat the shorelines for several hours without results. I turned to Dad and said, "Dad, you know — the deep water is the home of the fish". He didn't make a comment, he just sorta rolled his eyeballs at me and made another cast within inches of a root.

WHAT IS SPOONPLUGGING?

More years ago than I like to remember, I coined a word which expressed my thinking about the ingredients necessary to become a good fisherman. To become good and to achieve satisfaction from the sport, a degree of success is a must; and to obtain any great amount of success, the first requisite is knowledge. This is true in any phase of life, but is particularly true in fishing, as this sport carries the greatest number of prophets and gimmick makers whose purpose is anything but altruistic. So the need for a word that would embrace the total concept of fishing, I felt, was needed. The word I coined was SPOONPLUGGING.

Over the years, many interpretations have been applied to this word, and in some cases have become synonymous with things that are in no way connected to the original thought.

Some refer to the word SPOONPLUGGING as a "method" of fishing, such as fast trolling, or running helter-skelter over the lake. Others have associated the word with a certain type lure, which has been described as "a stepped on shoe-horn"; and, many other things, none of which relates to "knowledge", which is the main ingredient.

In the first place, there isn't a "method" of knowledge. The application of Spoonplugging knowledge or the use of tools to implement this knowledge, might be referred to as a "method", but the "knowledge" necessary to become a great fisherman is certainly not a "method". If, however, the total concept of Spoonplugging knowledge is learned and used in a precise and orderly manner as prescribed to become a great fisherman, then Spoonplugging could properly be referred to as a method.

SPOONPLUGGING is an all-inclusive word. It is the total concept for successful fishing.

- (1) It is an understanding of how fish live, his habits, his instincts, his reaction to stimuli, how weather and water conditions affect him, where he is likely to be found under various conditions, and what it takes to put him on the stringer at that particular time.
- (2) It is an orderly and precise manner in which to fish.
- (3) It is confidence in one's fishing; the removal of fear in fishing strange waters and for strange species.
- (4) It is the full understanding that there is no magic short cut to success; and that successful fishing is predicated on knowledge and the implementation of this knowledge.
- (5) It is the willingness to put forth effort.

- (6) It requires no special talent or ability to learn, only a strong desire to catch fish.
- (7) The guy who understands fish behavior and how to go about utilizing his knowledge to put fish on the stringer, we call a SPOONPLUGGER.
- (8) A SPOONPLUGGER has an unselfish attitude toward his fellow fisherman, directs his efforts toward conservation, and is concerned with his outdoor manners.
- (9) Equipment that was designed for better control, and allows the transfer of fishing knowledge to others as easily as possible, is called SPOONPLUGGING EQUIPMENT.
- (10) Lures which were designed to allow SPOONPLUGGING knowledge to be utilized to full advantage are called SPOON-PLUGS. These lures, through proper application, will be the means by which a fisherman can discipline himself, and constantly direct his attention to the important controls in fishing (depth and speed), rather than on aids (size, color and action).

Each of the above can be a factor in fishing growth, and a little further look may give a better understanding of what SPOONPLUGGING is all about.

Item No. 1 covers so much ground that it is impossible to cover it in its entirety here or in an article, or a group of articles. This is one of the most important phases of SPOON-PLUGGING.

Number 2 is certainly an important factor. If a fisherman is burdened with questions as to how he is going to fish a particular body of water, most of his time would be spent in a hit-or-miss fashion. One of the pleasures in fishing comes from KNOWING exactly what will be done the minute the lake is reached, and that what is done is correct. The mind is not cluttered with, "I hope the fish are bitin' today", or, "wonder what they're hittin' today?" Or, "I wonder where is the best place to fish?"

Number 3 is, in a way, a continuation of number two; but if we analyze it further, we see other factors enter the picture. First, it is in working strange or new waters that a fisherman truly begins to learn. HE must look at the terrain, check water color, follow the steps necessary to find and map structure, and arrive at the fish. Secondly, the challenge of working out strange waters opens horizons in fishing never seen before. New avenues of knowledge are experienced, which makes a fisherman become better and better at his chosen sport.

Number 4 is a most difficult item to remove from the

fisherman's thinking. He has, deeply ingrained, the feeling and hope that someday he will find that magic lure! He has a great desire and belief that he can go down to a store and buy immediate success in a fancy wrapped package. He is eternally blasted with the claims of gimmick-makers and the stories of sensational catches with some off-color lure, or one with some exotic action; or he reads about some fantastic lake miles away from civilization. Any one, or all, of these he believes to be the reason for the great catch he saw or heard about. This type of thinking must be removed from a fisherman's mind, if he is to gain success and satisfaction from HIS fishing, on HIS particular lake.

Number 5 will point out that, as a whole, people are not prone to discipline themselves on their own. They all too often exert minimum effort rather than maximum. If a problem is encountered, and they are at a loss as to how it can be solved, they will quit. The WHY and HOW to cure the problem may not be known or is not firmly implanted. WHY and HOW is not served up in some bright package, but is obtained through effort on the part of the fisherman; either through knowledge taught, or knowledge gained through years of experience. If there is a profound desire on the part of fishermen, be they old or young, skilled or unskilled, dumb or bright, they can be schooled to move ahead. This cannot be done with gimmicks, but with true facts and effort.

Number 6 may not be appreciated by some of the "experts". Over the years, it has amazed me to hear some of the so-called experts expound to beginning fishermen just what skills are needed and how difficult successful fishing is because of those smart, wily fish they will have to out-smart! Some would have you believe that fancy knot tying, tournament casting, and sophisticated equipment, which takes little less than a college professor's knowledge to operate, is necessary to become a successful fisherman. When actually, all it takes is a strong desire to catch fish, coupled with knowledge and the expending of some effort.

Number 7 is fully understood by a fisherman calling himself a Spoonplugger. He knows that his success is predicated on his having knowledge. He is aware that with all of his fishing knowledge, he will always be learning and will never reach the point where he can't get better! He knows that to be called a Spoonplugger entails many things, each of which will make him a better fisherman.

Number 8 is a continuation of number seven, with the addition of another factor. A factor, which I feel is of great

importance.

Fishermen, as a whole, are considered to be a very selfish group when it comes to sharing their knowledge or their fishing hole. They will break their backs to "beat" ole Charlie. The ego of some is something to behold. To some, a competitive spirit is innate, and this is good — unless it is carried to the extreme. When the motivating force in fishing is to beat the other fellow, or make a big name, then pretty soon you find that fisherman sneaking off to places where he won't be recognized, only showing his face when he has a good catch; or he seeks more fertile waters, such as newly constructed reservoirs. He substitutes winning and acclaim for learning, invents excuses for failures, and pretty soon his fishing success takes a nose-dive, and his fishing becomes a chore rather than a pleasure.

In any sport — football, baseball, golf — you find a highly competitive spirit, but at the same time, you find the "pros" in these sports sharing their knowledge, and in many instances giving their personal help. Why should the sport of fishing not carry this attitude, rather than that of selfishness?

The removal of selfishness is the greatest aid in becoming a good fisherman. You really learn when you begin to teach. Then a far greater personal satisfaction is achieved than continually being concerned with beating the other fellow.

Number 9 relates to fishing equipment. I prefer to call equipment "tools", as they have a function beyond that of merely being capable of hooking and reeling in fish. Proper "tools" will play an important part in learning and will allow fishing to be done in a correct manner. It is impossible to learn proper trolling or casting methods, unless the right equipment is used. At the same time, it is impossible to teach and transfer knowledge without "tools" that allow this knowledge to be felt, experienced and understood. Proper tools, and their use, will discipline the fisherman, and this is a must for successful fishing. Fishermen are not prone to do this for themselves; they tend to let other factors enter the picture and dominate their thinking unless something is used to keep their sights upon the important things, rather than on the minor events that will enter the picture.

Number 10, lures, is a subject that could cover a book. The majority of fishermen give more credit for their fishing success to lures than to any other one thing.

Let it be clearly understood — there is no such thing as a magic lure; there has never been one; and there will never be one. Most anything with hooks will catch fish at one

time or another! Some may do a little better than others. Lures should be put in their proper perspective, that is, how well they fit into certain categories. The various depths of water, the different types of water, different type structures, different presentations, and the varying seasons all call for lures, or "tools", that will allow the fisherman to accomplish what he is trying to do.

Spoonplugs are lures (tools) I designed many years ago, from necessity, as none were available that: (1) allowed control of depth and speed to any great degree; (2) that could be used for mapping, so as to determine bottom conditions and make-up; and (3) that would allow discipline in all steps of presentation; (4) that could be used as a tool for transferring knowledge to others. Proper use of these basic lures will tell what the bottom of the lake looks like, how it is made up, when and where to cast or troll, what type lure to use, and "why" you should do what you are doing.

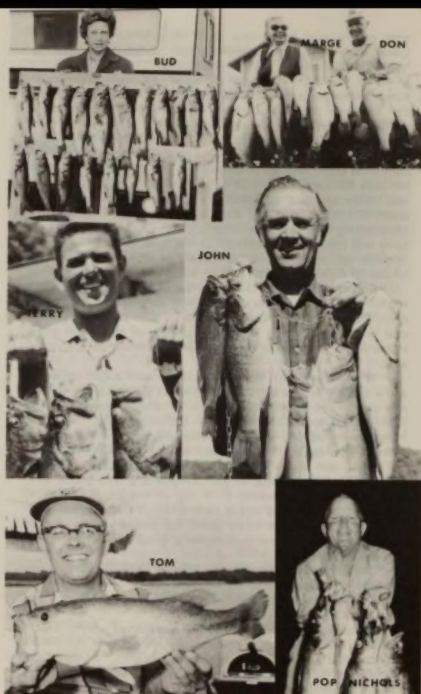
Proper tralling of the basic series will not only teach mapping and interpretation, but will serve as a means for discipline in the fisherman's efforts to gain more knowledge and how best to apply it. Proper casting of them will allow many depth and speed controls not obtainable in any other way.

It is unfortunate that a successful curriculum must, to some extent, be associated with specific gear; but the necessity should readily be understood. If proper equipment can be found to do the job fully, then I care not what the brand name might be. My aim is to make everything in the tackle box more valuable. This will occur when it is understood what each item can do, or not do, in the total picture.

SPOONPLUGGING, as you can see is a very broad term and covers a lot of territory. If any of the ten items listed could be eliminated, it would be a difficult chore to perform. You might become a fairly good fisherman if just one or two were mastered. But to become a great fisherman, all of them are needed.

So, in the future, when the term is used, be sure to immediately associate it to its simplest form — knowledge of what makes a fish tick, and what it takes to consistently put him on the stringer.

Spoonplugging is primarily concerned with OPEN WATER. That is, water away from shore with no visible objects such as grass, weeds, pads, bushes, stumps, etc. There exist no fishing problems in visible shoreline features — A FISHING PROBLEM IS AN OPEN WATER PROBLEM.



6

SPoonPLUGGERS GLOSSARY

The Spoonpluggers Glossary are terms and words I have used in this book. These words and terms must be fully understood, so that you and I will be on common ground and speak the same language. This is necessary so that you will understand the basic information, and set the stage for the further expansion of your fishing knowledge.

- BOW** — Excess line, in the form of a curve, which occurs between the rod tip and lure.
- BREAK** — Where structure is no longer uniform due to dips, or a quick drop in depth, rocks, stumps, bushes, sunken objects, etc.
- BREAKLINE** — A line on structure where there is a definite increase in depth, either sudden or gradual, weedline, brushline, edge of channels or holes, where two bodies of water meet which differ in temperature and/or color.
- BRUSHLINE** — The deep-water edge of a line of brush.
- CHECKED** — When an area has been thoroughly fished correctly.
- CLEAN BOTTOM** — Bottoms free of debris, muck, moss, etc.
- COLD FRONT** — A weather condition. (Description and position obtainable from daily weather maps and reports).
- CONTACT POINT** — The position on structure where contact is first made by fish on their migration from deep water.
- CONTROLS** — Things or factors to be considered and controlled for successful fishing (Depth, Speed, Size, Color, Action).
- CONTROL** — To present lures in an orderly and correct manner.
- DEEP WATER** — Water that has a depth greater than eight to ten feet.
- DIRTY BOTTOM** — Bottoms covered with debris, muck, moss, etc.
- DROP-OFF** — The place on structure where there is a sudden or rapid drop into the deepest water, such as a hole or channel.
- ELIMINATED WATER** — Water that has been fished correctly and has produced no action.
- FAN CAST** — A series of casts that covers the water in an arc.
- FINGER** — A projection or extrusion, in a lake bottom formation (structure).
- FREE SWIMMING LURE** — A lure moving or swimming through open water.

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- GAME FISH** — Any fish considered worthy of pursuit, either for its pugnacious disposition or for its flesh.
- HARD BOTTOM** — Bottoms with a firm condition, usually associated with sand, clay, rocks, gravel, etc.
- HOME** — The deep water areas where fish spend most of their time.
- HOT-SPOT** — An area where fish are caught consistently when fish are said to be 'biting'.
- JUMP LURE** — Normally, weighted lures used for bottom work, whose speed and action is obtained by rod or reel movement in the form of a jump or jerk.
- MIGRATION** — Movement of fish from one section of water to another. Normally used when speaking of a depth change.
- MIGRATION ROUTE** — The path fish take as they move from deep water to shallow water, or vice versa.
- MOVEMENT** — Closely associated with migration, but also meaning when fish become active (opposite of dormant).
- OPEN WATER** — Water free from vegetation growth, and away from shoreline.
- POINT** — An extrusion in the shoreline that extends into and under the water.
- PRESENTATION** — The way lures and bait are presented or displayed, to the fish.
- SANCTUARY** — The section of water, in the home area where fish spend most of their time.
- SCATTERPOINT** — The depth, on the bottom, where fish start to separate and scatter and are no longer grouped together.
- SCHOOL OF FISH** — A number of fish that are grouped close together.
- SCHOOLING** — A school of fish feeding on the surface, visibly tearing up the water.
- SHALLOW WATER** — Water less than eight to ten feet in depth.
- SHARPER BREAK** — A more rapid increase or decrease in depth than the surrounding area; steeper, more acute (see "breakline").
- SIZE OF LURE** — Normally, the length in inches rather than by weight.
- SOFT BOTTOM** — Bottoms covered with soft silt, mud, muck, marl, etc.
- SPOOKED** — Fish which have become alerted or have become scared. Their reaction is to drop into deeper water or to become very inactive.
- STRAGGLERS** — An occasional fish, which is usually found

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- apart from the others. (Yearlings are often in this category).
- STRIKING** — A fish hitting a lure due to his pugnacious nature, not due to a feeding process; survival instincts, reflex action, etc.
- STRUCTURE** — The bottom of the lake with some unusual features that distinguish it from the surrounding bottom area.
- TRAFFIC** — The amount of fishing pressure, or water skiers, large boats and motors, and fast boats in a given area.
- WALKING OR BUMPING** — A lure moving along the bottom and actually coming into contact with it in this manner.
- WATER COLOR** — The degree of clarity.
- WEEDLINE** — The deep-water edge of a line of weeds.
- YEARLINGS** — One to three year old fish.

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BASIC MOVEMENTS OF FISH

As you begin your study of fish behavior, one of your first concerns may be the vast number of fish species available to you as a fisherman. While many fishermen desire to fish for only one variety, others go after all the species, and consider anything that swims fair game.

In some areas many species are not available, and local interest will be centered around just one species. It would not only be impossible to write or to teach on every particular species, but I have found it unnecessary. It would be a mistake to even attempt it.

A fish is a fish — whether in fresh or saltwater. His life is controlled by his environment and certain survival instincts. He has a pea sized brain, and never had an original thought in his life. He is unable to size up a situation and to measure any particular consequence as a result of his action. His reaction to certain stimuli does not involve any long, thought out process. A fish just doesn't have this capacity. What he does, he does in spite of himself.

One of the most difficult fish to catch consistently is the largemouth bass. But here is a fish that is widely distributed and could be referred to as a UNIVERSAL, game fish. Any lack of interest in the bass is due almost entirely to the difficulties encountered in catching him. By coincidence, luck, or what have you, this fish is the key to a successful, educational program on fishing. While some fish may have some peculiarities for his particular species, if you direct your efforts toward the largemouth bass, learn his habits, movements, and what must be done to catch him consistently, it will enable you to handle all the different species as well. It is my opinion that successful fishing cannot be taught by any species, other than the largemouth bass.

While fishing for saltwater stripers in California I was asked, How did I catch stripers in places where they weren't supposed to be, and when the tide wasn't right? To these questions I replied, "I caught them while fishing for largemouth bass." As these people did not have the knowledge of fish behavior, they, of course, didn't know what the heck I was talking about.

Whether fishing in freshwater or saltwater, for large or small fish, for smallmouths, walleyes, northern pike, or any variety of fish, your thinking will be the same.

Many fishermen fail to realize the extent, or how fish move or migrate. They spend their entire time fishing in areas

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where the fish spends the least of their time. When they are unsuccessful they have no idea of why they failed or where they should have fished. My guess would be that you probably belong to this group. I would go one step further and guess, when you go fishing, you HOPE the fish are biting. If they aren't you are stumped, and your only recourse is to wait until they start **biting**, before you catch any.

IT IS RIGHT HERE THAT YOUR THINKING HAS GOT TO START CHANGING. In most cases, when you first get on the water, the fish do not immediately gobble up everything you throw at them. You will find many times you have to exercise patience. BUT, you do not have to wait until the fish start **biting**, but have to wait until the fish start **MOVING**.

Fish do not move constantly nor consistently, and just when and where this **MOVEMENT** will occur will determine our whole approach to fishing. You just can't catch fish where they ain't. Throughout our entire study we will be concerned with these movements.

In this study we will concern ourselves with only the **basic** movements as they occur under **normal** conditions of weather and water, and in the most **common** areas of a body of water. It is these areas the fish use in their movements and migrations, that I have termed **STRUCTURE**.

Suffice to say, if you do not fully understand **WHERE**, **WHY**, and **WHAT** about the fish, the study of tackle and how to use it to catch fish will be a waste of time. You could become the greatest caster or troller in the world. You could have the best and most expensive equipment available, BUT you could still get skunked if you don't thoroughly understand **HOW** fish move. Without this knowledge it would be pure luck if you caught fish.

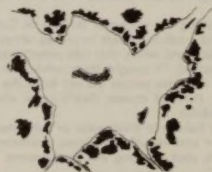


FIGURE 1

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Figure No. 1 is looking down on a section of water which could be found in any lake, pond or stream, etc.

Most likely, when you arrive at the dock, you'll ask the operator, "How's fishing?" His reply will probably be, "You should have been here last week."

You and I are not interested in yesterday's fishing or last week's fishing. The only thing we are interested in is: How's fishing today? Even with such a negative answer we know exactly where the fish will be. **They will be either in the shallows — the deep water — or somewhere in between — RIGHT?** This statement always brings a howl of laughter in my fishing classes and clinics. It must sound stupidly amusing. BUT, later on you'll get the point of it. If you don't, then I've done a poor job of teaching or you've done a bad job of studying.



FIGURE 2

Figure No. 2 is a view looking down on only a portion of a lake. It shows both shallow and deep water. In this drawing, all the water from the shoreline (zero feet) extending out to a depth of 8 to 10 feet, is defined as **shallow** water. All water more than 8-10 feet in depth, is considered **deep** water. Regardless of where it may be found, for consistent, successful fishing, a distinction must be made between **shallow** and **deep** water. Only by doing this can a correct presentation of lures be made.

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FIGURE 3

Figure No. 3 shows a cross section view of this water. This view defines clearly the statement made previously concerning the fish being in the shallows, in the deep water, or somewhere in between.

(1) - THE DEEPEST WATER IN THIS AREA IS THE HOME OF THE FISH.

(2) - THE OLDER AND BIGGER FISH BECOME THE TIGHTER THEY SCHOOL, AND THE MORE RELUCTANT THEY ARE TO LEAVE THIS DEEP WATER.

These two statements may well be at odds with what you've been led to believe, but be sure you keep these two FACTS in mind at all times. If YOU are one who clings to the antiquated idea that the home of the bass is in the shallows, behind some log, under the lily pads or weeds or if you believe aunker bass is a "Lone Ranger", or a hermit who lives by himself, you might as well stop reading right here. Becoming a good fisherman depends entirely on your acknowledging and accepting these TRUE FACTS.

You will note a group of dots have been placed in the deepest water. These represent a school of bass. They may be any weight — two pounders — four pounders — up to approximately six pounders.

The position of the fish, as shown, is in the deepest channel or hole. This is mainly the winter position of the fish. The colder part of the season (late fall, winter, early spring) can and does have rough, changing weather conditions. This deep water is more stable, especially as far as temperature is concerned. **The fish are here due to the stable condition, not due to their seeking some particular temperature.** While there is not much fishing nor movement of the fish during this colder period, I'll place them here, to start with, so as to show what is to be expected during the cold period, and the beginning of the season.

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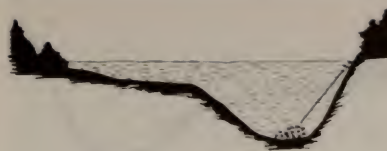


FIGURE 4

During the early or cold part of the year there will be short, scattered migrations from the deep channel or hole to the steep, deep shoreline (shown in Figure No. 4). These movements may not occur very often, and seldom do all the fish move at one time. Most of the time the movements are scattered and unpredictable. BUT, if you fish during the colder times of the season these steep banks and steep shorelines should be checked. **More will be said on this at a later time.**



FIGURE 5

Figure No. 5 shows the direction of movement during most of the year (the fishing season). During these warmer seasons the movements will be from the deep water toward the more shallow sloping sides of the area. While a few, small, scattered fish may still be found along the steeper banks, it would actually be a waste of time and effort to spend much time there. These smaller fish are not the ones we are primarily interested in.

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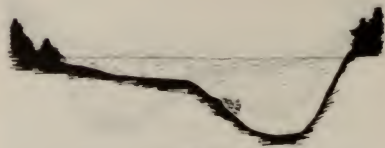


FIGURE 6

Figure No. 6 brings the fish out of the deepest water and shows them in a spot which I call their deep water SANCTUARY. This is the place where they will take up "housekeeping" for the summer, or fishing season. **This is the place where they will spend most of their time.** If there is a depth of water more than 20 feet available, their home or SANCTUARY will ALWAYS be below this 20 foot depth. If it were possible to state the approximate depth of this deep water sanctuary I would say it would be at the 30 to 35 foot depth. If this depth isn't available, the sanctuary would be in the DEEPEST WATER AVAILABLE. Your reaction may be: "Yeah, but the lake I fish is 100 feet deep." I don't care how deep it is — the more water below this 30 to 35 feet the better. At times the fish might be at the 100 foot depth, due to certain weather and water conditions. But, as conditions improve, they'll return to the sanctuary. **You must visualize at all times that any fish you catch originated or came from the 30 to 35 foot depth, or at least until you can prove otherwise.**

It might be a good idea to say something further in regard to the depths of water I've mentioned. First, I mentioned the 8 to 10 foot depth. This I said separated the shallow water from the deep water. Next, the 30 to 35 foot water. This I viewed as the SANCTUARY, or the starting point for migrations. These important depths were established by the FISH — not Buck Perry. I merely found out the importance of these depths in the life of a fish.

It's a shame this deep water sanctuary isn't in shallower water. Because, if it were, we would be able to present our lures more satisfactorily, and also be able to locate the fish more easily. This 30 to 35 foot depth spells trouble for the fisherman when it comes to presenting lures and locating

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fish. Most fishermen start losing control below the 12 to 15 foot depths. Of course there are lures and procedures which will allow you to go beyond this depth, but as you go deeper, it becomes more difficult to know exactly where your lure is and what it is doing. Control is lost, and if too much control is lost, it's not likely that a school of fish can be located and made to strike. We are also faced with the fact that fish in deep water are more dormant and in a more non-chasing mood. Even though we may reach the depths, it is hard to present the lure or bait with enough exactness to make contact with the fish.

I know just what you're thinking. If the fish spend most of their time in the deep water — where I can't fish effectively, then how the heck can I catch them consistently? This is a good question. Our only salvation comes from the fact that **THE FISH DON'T STAY HERE ALL THE TIME.**



FIGURE 7

Figure No. 7 shows how once or twice a day, on a normal or good fishing day, the fish will move from the deep water sanctuary toward the SHALLOW WATER. We are saved again because **THIS MOVEMENT IS NOT HAPHAZARD.** When the fish move they proceed towards the shallows, along well defined paths or MIGRATION routes. These migration

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routes are on **STRUCTURE** — bottom structure. They have characteristics which serve as guides or signposts the fish are able to see and to follow. They know their position at all times during these migrations. These routes, or structures have definite characteristics which distinguish them from the surrounding area. The fish can recognize them, and you as a fisherman must also be able to distinguish them from the surrounding areas.

In most lakes and reservoirs the **most common** structure you'll find will be a gradual, sloping bar which extends out from the shoreline. The "points" in the shoreline normally indicate a bar or ridge running out under the water. The migration route could also be represented by other forms or conditions which exist on the bottom. **BUT**, whatever it is — if it's a migration route — it will have one thing in common with **ALL** migration routes. **It will extend to the deepest water in the area**, and will thus have immediate access to deep water. If these bars or structures do not extend **ALL THE WAY**, the fish will not use them as migration routes. This is one of the more important things in this book. **IF FISH MIGRATE ON A STRUCTURE IT MUST HAVE IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO DEEP WATER.**

As stated previously, on a normal fishing day, there will be one or two movements of fish towards shallow water. There is no way to determine when these movements will occur as they usually change from day to day. If there is an early morning movement then another should occur later in the afternoon or evening (if no weather change occurs).

Let's say you go fishing early in the morning. You are on the lake shortly after daybreak. Action is pretty good for a couple of hours, then abruptly quits. You continue fishing hard all day, but get little or no solid action until late in the afternoon. This is the situation many of you have experienced. What's the reason? You caught fish early because the fish had moved shallower or into a reachable depth. You were fishing where the fish were. The fish then moved back down to deep water — out of reach. They didn't move back until later in the day — and then you caught them again. It's pretty hard to catch fish if they aren't there.

Now let's say you didn't catch any fish, or just a couple small stragglers early in the morning. This meant that no movement occurred. There is one thing to do. Don't leave the water between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. My personal experience has proven this period produces some of the finest movements.

Whenever a movement occurs, early, late, or in the

middle of the day or night, it does not necessarily mean that any two movements will be for the same distance or for the same amount of time. The weather and water conditions will control these movements. **It controls how far they go and how long they stay.**

I am quite sure several questions are bugging you after reading the above information on movement periods. One might be, Do fish move because they are hungry? The answer is no. Fish will move and become active without feeding, but, normally you can assume feeding goes hand in hand with migration. Fish do not have to migrate to shallow water to feed. They can feed at any depth. Their menu may change, but they can feed.

You might ask, "What 'triggers' the activity and movements of the fish?"

There is no question but that it is a weather condition. But, I doubt if anyone knows the **exact** part that starts and stops the movements.

I have my ideas, but I have no definite **FACTS**. I feel it is a **LIGHT** condition. I can quite often predict when a movement is about to begin, or when one is in progress. Light is made up of many parts (frequencies). I do not know what part starts and stops the movement, **BUT**, I do know, that whatever it is, it has a relationship to the **observed** light. Suffice to say, **if my light observations give me answers, that's good enough for me.**

YOU, may have to study, observe, and have years of experience before you can predict, with any degree of accuracy, when a movement is about to **begin**. You shouldn't have any trouble knowing when it **stops**.

One thing I am definitely sure of, the movements of the fish are not triggered or controlled by their hunger. You would have a hard time figuring out why all the fish in a lake become hungry at the same time. And it would not explain the activity and movement without feeding. **A FISH CAN BE MADE TO STRIKE** — this is his nature. I never expect to catch my fish feeding, but I am happy when it happens that way.

You may want to know if the moon has any effect on fish? I have been unable to find any relationship between movements and the phase of the moon. If there is any I am quite sure local weather and water conditions would completely wreck it.

How do I know if there will be one, or two movements in a day? A rule of thumb might be, in colder parts of the season you should expect one in middle of the day. In the

hotter season you should expect two. One in the morning and another in the afternoon or evening. This is just a hand rule. It can be completely upset by weather and water conditions.

Let's say a good movement occurs in the middle of the day or at 1:30 p.m. Should I expect another later on? I wouldn't count on another one. I'd probably go home, unless I was interested in learning a little more about the lake.

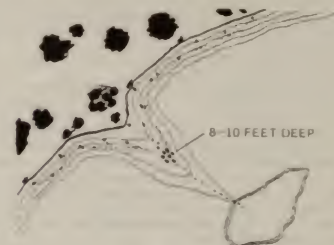


FIGURE 8

Figure No. 8 shows the migration route of the fish as they move towards the shallows. This path may not always be straight because the structure they are following might turn to the right or left.

When migrating, the fish move **along the bottom**. Here again I repeat, how far toward the shallows they go will be determined by the weather and water conditions that exist at the time. If conditions are good, most all the fish may move right up to the 8 or 10 foot depth. If conditions are ideal many of them will scatter into the shallows, along the shoreline. However, you will note in figure 8 there are still fish at the scatter point (8 to 10 feet).

It is when a situation such as this (Figure 8) occurs, that you get the word, "the fish are biting." **BUT**, this ideal situation, with the fish moving so shallow, doesn't happen very often. And, most likely by the time you reached the water, or if you limited your fishing to the shoreline shallows,

you would draw a blank, as far as catching any fish. You would probably also wind up cussing those guys who put out such a lousy fishing report.

At certain times of the year, mostly spring, the fish may remain in the shallows for some period of time. They may even move as far as the bays, coves, etc. However, most of the season, they are in the shallows for only a short length of time, and the distance they scatter will not be great. Thus, the productive shoreline will be only a very short stretch at this time.

The first fish to appear in the shallows will be the smaller or "Yearling" fish. Yearling fish (1 to 3 years old, approximately 2 pounds) are not compatible with the larger fish. The larger fish would snatch them up like popcorn. After they become 2-2½ lbs. they will join the larger fish in the area. If yearling fish are caught in any quantity, in the shallows, this should mean a movement, and the larger fish should be at a reachable depth, on structure, in the immediate area. **When fish become active and move, ALL the fish move — some more than others, BUT they ALL move.**

Yearling fish are sorta like teenagers, and may run around in all directions with no set pattern. **STRAGGLERS** are in most cases yearling fish. But, anytime you catch a fish in the shallows — regardless of how small it might be — you should ask yourself, How did he get here? Where did he come from? And what route did he use? When you can find the answers to these questions you're well on your way to becoming a darn good fisherman.

I am quite sure you have been into a group of small fish that were up on structure. You caught a lot of them, but when the action was over you suddenly realized you didn't catch any **lunkers**. Why not? Simply because **you were fishing for small fish**. If the larger fish had been around the yearlings wouldn't have been there. If you would have moved out over the deeper structure you would, most likely have found the bigger fish. Remember I said, "The larger they get the more reluctant they are to move to the shallows." I also said "the small fish are not compatible with the larger fish." The next time this happens, move out.

Most of the time, the migration of the larger fish does not extend quite to, or past, the scatter point, (8 to 10 feet.) This is especially true IF the school contains the biggest bass in the area. Never expect the entire school of large fish to move into the shallows and scatter at the same time. In all my years of fishing I have never seen more than two or three of the largest bass move in at the same time. I know you

have fished the shoreline at some time and found the fish really biting. But, how many **big** bass did you catch? The reason you caught only one or two was not due to any fault of yours. Nor was it because the large bass were "Wise Ole Birds". It was because they were not there.

North or south, some fish live longer, grow faster, and get to a final weight above the average. Normally, however, a largemouth will die off by the time he reaches six pounds. In most areas of the country the average life span, in relation to the average growing rate, will normally produce some schools of bass whose weight is slightly under six pounds. But whatever the average, if any "lunkers" exist in the area, they will be with this group. I consider only bass above six pounds somewhat of a freak. In other words, you just don't figure to go out and catch a limit of eight pounders. If it is ever done, a tremendous amount of "culling" will have to be done.

You may want to know, at this point, how fast do fish move on structure? This can never be predetermined. The existing conditions, and the species of fish, will determine this. Another point which should be brought in here is that of trying to determine the length of the migration route. They vary. Some are quite short while others are quite long. But whatever their length, they have one thing in common. **They extend to the deepest water in the area.** When working for fish on a migration route, never be concerned as to how far you are from the shoreline.

You may also want to know, how long do fish stay on these structures before going back to deep water? There is again no set period of time before they drop back to deep water (by the same route). The length of time depends entirely on the conditions that exist — weather and water. At times it may be minutes, at other times it may be hours. For an average, however, I'd suggest you figure on minutes instead of hours.

Keeping Figure No. 8 in mind, let's assume lots of fish have scattered into the shallows. This is when you, as a shoreline fisherman, score. This area would become known as a "hot spot". It is always important to find out where "hot spots" exist. They indicate to you that this is potentially good water, and they serve as a key for finding a migration route.

Shoreline features are never a factor in determining whether this is a "hot spot." It is a "hot spot" only because the structure the fish use when moving from deep water to shallow water just happens to lead to this particular area.

22

Fishermen in every section of the country seem to have varied opinions concerning the why's and wherefore's of fishing. Many think the behavior of bass in the north and south varies from those found in the east or west. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is, however, one mistaken idea or thought that seems to be universal. Many fishermen think the shoreline must have weeds, brush, lily pads, or growth of some kind in order to catch largemouth. They have the mistaken idea that bass spend most of their lives hiding behind or under such cover. When they don't catch them around this cover they figure the bass aren't biting. Joe Stearns, former Educational Director of Georgia's Game and Fish Commission summed up this thinking rather aptly. After having a Spoonplugging lesson Joe wrote, "Up until I was introduced to Spoonplugging I always thought when I dropped a popping bug next to an old log, and didn't get a strike — the fish weren't biting. Now I know differently."

What is the basis of this belief and what are the facts? The facts are that while fish are reluctant and hesitant to go into the shallows, they may do so more readily, and stay for a longer period of time, if at the end of the migration route this type of cover is available. The relationship between the stump, pads, brush, etc., to the location of the fish in the shallows is due to these objects serving as "breaks." These "breaks" are the spots where fish on migration stop or pause in their movement. They also serve as visual objects for the fisherman. So — the two come together. This being so, the shoreline fisherman has caught bass more often around cover, and has therefore decided this is a "must." It does have the advantage of offering the fish some "break", but should never be mistakenly called his home. Some of the finest "hot spots" I know, do not have as much as a single blade of grass.



FIGURE 9

23

Figure No. 9 shows a cross section view of the migration or movement of a group of fish on structure, to a depth of 8 to 10 feet. I consider this a shallow movement, especially if the fish are rather large. Most of the time the migration toward the shallows will stop at a greater depth (due to weather and water conditions). It is when the fish get to the 8 to 10 foot depth, that the larger fish start saying, "easy now — I'm getting too shallow." They become leery and skittish when they get this shallow.

Conditions would have to be near perfect for many of these fish to continue into shallower water. Unless this further movement occurred it would mean the average fisherman, and especially the shoreline fisherman, would never make contact with the school. But, you as a Spoonplugger, would have them dead to rights at this depth.

Figure No. 9 would be an ideal condition for Spoonpluggers. Their limit of bass is schooled, immediately available at a good, reachable depth for easy lure control. The action would be fast and furious. This is a situation every fisherman dreams of, but only Spoonpluggers consistently accomplish.



FIGURE 10

Figure No. 10 shows a cross section view of a structure (bar) where the shallows contain weeds. The weedline becomes a stopping place for most fish migrations. If the weedline doesn't go beyond the shallows (8 to 10 feet), then the weedline would not get the mass movement or all the larger fish.

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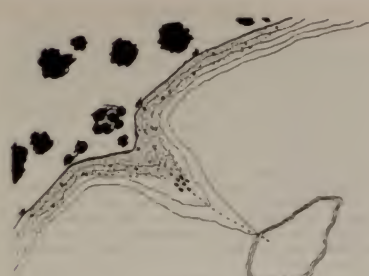


FIGURE 11

Figure No. 11 shows a top view of a FULL MIGRATION of fish toward a weedy shoreline. The weeds go to a fairly good depth. Most of the fish have moved to the weedline, with some smaller, and a few larger ones, penetrating back into the weeds — some have scattered along the edge of the weedline. In other words, if the weedline went to, or below the 8 to 10 foot depth, it would become the scatter point.

All of these comments and Figures 1 through 11 might have appeared to have taken considerable time. But, it is very important that you as a fisherman understand BASIC MOVEMENT. If this is not fully understood you will be unable to make consistent catches — it's that simple.

SUMMATION

Although I stressed **bass** in this BASIC MOVEMENT section, I was actually referring to ALL game fish — walleyes, northern pike, muskies, stripers, etc. If any of the preceding is not firmly implanted in your mind — go back and re-read the parts that are confusing you. Your continued study and understanding of this movement section lays the ground work for the rest of your Spoonplugging knowledge.

"MUST" POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. Deep water is the HOME of the fish. They spend most of their time here.

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- 2 - Periodically, fish become more active and move from this deep water toward the shallows. This MOVEMENT is not just in any direction, but along well established routes on particular bottom conditions called STRUCTURE.
- 3 - ALL PRODUCTIVE STRUCTURE must have immediate access to deep water. These structures provide the fish with a visual path from the deep to the shallow. They provide them with the quickest route back to the only security they know — DEEP WATER.
- 4 - How far fish move on this route, and how long they stay, is dependent on weather and water conditions that prevail at the time of the movement.
- 5 - Fish do not move constantly nor consistently. At times, it may be necessary to wait until the fish move, but you better figure on going to the fish, because he may not come to you. If you are presenting your lures or bait CORRECTLY, and catching no fish, you are not fishing deep enough.



26

STRUCTURE

Today you hear and read a great deal about 'structure' or 'structure fishing', as some call it. When I coined the word STRUCTURE, more than a quarter of a century ago, and began to use it in seminars and lectures to explain its use and importance in fish migration, I was like a voice crying in the wilderness. Not so, today. Today the word has become an integral part of most writers and fishermen's concept of successful fishing.

Most understand that structure is important to both fish and fishermen. But, I find that many are not fully aware of the different type structures the fish use in natural lakes and reservoirs (man-made lakes). I further find that most fishermen have little knowledge as to where the different structures may be located, and very few, who can distinguish between the good and the bad, or interpret those that affect movement to a lesser or a greater degree.

Many fishermen call themselves "structure fishermen", and their total concept of structure is some 'point' in the shoreline, and the 'bar' that may be present. They have no idea as to the movements of the fish, and in most cases, limit their casting to visible objects, such as weeds, bushes, stumps, etc., located in the shallow water. They never realize, that anytime they are casting to a visible object, they are wasting their time in most instances, and they are doing their fishing no differently from their father, grandfather, and great grandfathers back to the beginning of time. The only difference is, they have more sophisticated equipment, and wear more patches — telling the world what great fishermen they are.

Lakes and reservoirs come in all shapes and sizes. They exist in all parts of the country. Each differs from the other in terrain, weather and water conditions.

Some have only one predominate fish, while others contain several species. Many are quite shallow, while others are quite deep. Some are full of brush or weeds, others are clean. Quite a few are clear, but many hold dingy or muddy water. Some may be long and narrow, while others are spread out over a large area.

To discuss all the different aspects of the many fishing waters found throughout the country would take a great deal of time and space. But, at this particular time it is sufficient to say that very few of these bodies of water will present identical problems at any one given time.

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HOWEVER, there are two things that each have in common — these are, FISH and STRUCTURE.

As stated before, fish, with their innate instincts for survival, do not differ in the north, south, east or west. Their behavior does not vary in reservoirs from that in natural lakes. Fish are fish, regardless of their geographical location, and regardless of the body of water in which they are found.

STRUCTURE, and the way fish use and adapt to it, does not change in climate nor in residence, and herein lies the secret whereby you as a fisherman can expand your fishing horizons. You can get to a point where you'll feel at home on any reservoir, located in any part of the country, with little worry as to the shape or conditions that each might present.

We have established that the home of the fish is DEEP WATER. Normally, this home is in water so deep that for most of the time the fish cannot be found, and difficulty is encountered in presenting lures properly at these depths. As fishermen we are saved because these fish become active at times and move away from this home area towards the shallows. We are again saved because this MOVEMENT toward the shallows is not in a haphazard way.

The direction the fish choose, as they move towards the shallows, is well defined by "signposts" which they are able to see and use. These are the areas we have established as STRUCTURE — and MIGRATION ROUTES.

All of this may seem like I am repeating the same things over and over. You're right, I am. In my years of teaching I have found some fishermen do not grasp these basic facts, and become lost later on. When this happens they lose interest and go back to their old style of fishing. I don't want you to do this.

In our study we need to establish the various types of STRUCTURE found in lakes and reservoirs. We want to do this because the fish will use various types to establish their location and movement. Some bodies of water will be so made up, that one particular type structure will be more suitable or predominate, while in another body of water, the productive structure types will be entirely different.

In the drawing (Figure No. 12) are shown typical structures which are found in lakes and reservoirs. Some lakes and reservoirs may not contain all of these types, but they would contain some of them. All of these areas have characteristics that distinguish them from the surrounding areas.

28

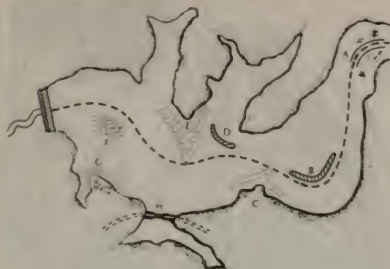


FIGURE 12

A — The shallower sections of the channel or feeder streams, with shorter, flatter bars; with a breakline along the channel that can be reached, and bottom in the immediate area with stumps, rocks, bushes, etc.

B — A "delta" conditions, or a ridge like structure, along the old stream bed, which is normally found in the large, flatter areas of a reservoir.

C — Shorter bars which are rather steep and extend to the channel which swings rather close to shore. This would include the short bars located in bays and coves.

D — Big sweeping bars off a point, with a long 'breakline' into deeper water. The breakline is straight with no visible extrusions or "fingers", that would definitely mark the area where the fish move up on structure.

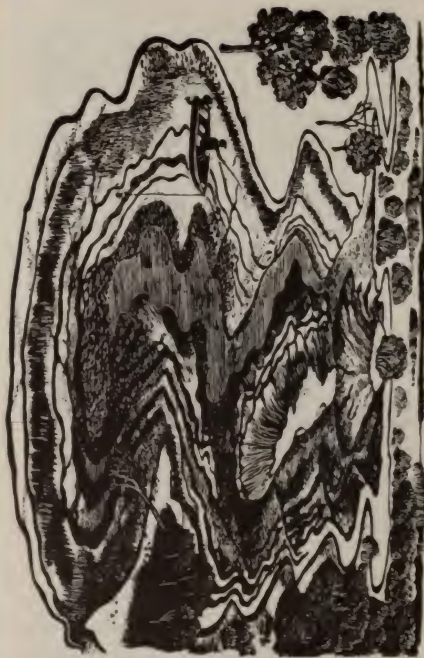
E — Long structure (such as bars) that go some distance into the lake or reservoir. These could be a sand bar, a red clay ridge, or a reef, etc.

F — Underwater islands, or as some refer to them, humps.

G — Steep shores, which may be rocky ledges that drop off fast into deep water close to shore.

H — Man-made structures — such as old roadbeds, causeways, dams, etc.

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The KEY to successful structure fishing is for you to be able to separate good looking structure from PRODUCTIVE structure. Knowing the ingredients which go into making a productive structure can change you over night from a so-so fisherman to a consistent fish catcher. If you fail to grasp all the other information in this book, and just learn the difference, and how to find the good Structures, you will have spent your money wisely. You must always remember that ON STRUCTURE is where you will catch the fish.

The next portion of our study will be devoted to helping you to interpret structure, what features exist and how fish react to them. For you see, YOU COULD HAVE SO-CALLED STRUCTURE AND NO FISH — BUT — YOU CANNOT HAVE FISH WITHOUT STRUCTURE.

On the opposite page we have a drawing of a lake. You will note you cannot see any water. **This is the mental picture you must have on all bodies of water that you fish. THIS IS WHAT THE FISH SEE.**

Look this drawing over carefully. Can you pick out the different type structures? What areas of the shoreline, or what portions of the weedline, should be potentially good water? Why do you think the fisherman is not casting toward the shoreline?



31

BREAKS AND BREAKLINES

For you to more thoroughly understand the basic movements of fish on structure, let's take a closer look at the structures themselves. Fish moving from the deep holes or channels on structure, such as those listed in the previous section, have additional VISIBLE OBJECTS on the structure, which serve as guides for their migrations. We will classify these objects into two categories — BREAKS and BREAKLINES.

BREAKLINES are the areas where there is a more rapid or sudden increase in depth — such as the edge of a channel, the "wall" of a weedline, the edge of a gully, a ledge, etc. Most bodies of water will have many breaklines. In some cases they are easy to see, while at other times they are so small that only the best fisherman can locate them.

We classify **BREAKS** as the other objects found along bottom such as rocks, eroded spots, humps, logs, stumps, clean spots, weeds, bushes, sunken objects, etc.

The "breaks" and "breaklines" help serve as guidelines and 'signposts' by which the fish migrate, **THEY ARE THE KEYS TO WHERE FISH WILL BE FOUND.**

At this point, let me make a couple more profound statements. **WHEN FISH MOVE OR MIGRATE ON STRUCTURE, THEY WILL EITHER PAUSE OR STOP AT A "BREAK" IN THE STRUCTURE.**

The weather and water conditions that prevail at the time of movement (migration) will determine just how long the pause is, or at which 'break' they will finally stop before turning around and heading back to the home area.

Let us pause here, and look at the above statements a little closer. Many fishermen do not realize the importance of these facts. There are two things involved here. First, the breaks and breaklines serve as 'signposts' for the fish on their migrations. Second, they serve as the KEY to where the fish will be found at different times.

This second fact is the one so important to you as a fisherman. Remember I said, you better go to the fish, he may not come to you? Where then would you go? Suppose you found the fish not moving, and you had to wait for migration to occur, where would you wait? Where would you concentrate any effort?

Your reaction might be, "Well, I'd just keep working the whole structure".

This is not good enough. There's lots wrong with this thought.



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Most structures are rather large, with many features and a multitude of depths. How would you know you are fishing CORRECTLY all sections of the structure?

I have found that when a person is fishing blindly, he will not do a thorough job. He will stumble around over the area as if he were lost — which, in fact, he is. At some sections of the structure his lure and procedure may be correct, and the area tested, but it is not likely this will hold true, on the bulk of the structure.

The only way to fish a structure correctly is to know what you are trying to ACCOMPLISH with your lures or bait. If you have no idea as to the position, or depth, of a particular spot you are trying to work, how would you know what to use, or how to go about it? However, if you KNOW the depth, or the position, on the structure you are trying to check, then it is an easy matter to choose lures and procedures that will test it thoroughly and correctly. Therefore, how great it is, that fish pause or stop at breaks and breaklines, and you and I can "pinpoint" the areas to fish.

BREAKLINE

For this section of our study we will not concern ourselves with all of the various types of structure which may be found, nor will we go into detail concerning the different types of breaklines. But rather, we will show you how to recognize a typical breakline. This type of breakline will be found on many structures, and it is important to fish movements as well as to your ability to interpret the structure.

A "Breakline" is in reality a "break". But, since "breaks" on structure can be represented by several different things, we use the term "Breakline" when referring to a place on the bottom where a more rapid change in depth takes place. As the word suggests, this break in the bottom does not occur at one particular spot, but is a well defined line that runs for some distance; such as the edge along a channel.

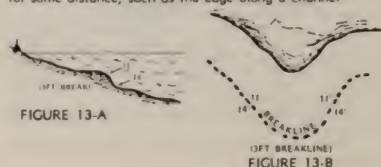


FIGURE 13-A

FIGURE 13-B

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Figure 13-A, shows a cross section, or side view, of a gradual sloping "bar". At a depth of 11 feet there is a sudden or more rapid increase in depth to 14 feet, where it again flattens out into the gentle slope. In describing this particular situation, we would say, "A 3 foot break occurs at 11 feet".

Figure No. 13-B is a top view of this same area. The broken line represents the "breakline" running around the bar. In other words, we have, "a 3 foot breakline" running all the way around the bar.

Breaklines can occur at any place on the bottom, and they can come in all shapes and sizes.

The following figures (14, 15, 16) represent a typical example of breaklines on a structure. Three views are shown of a structure off a "point" (or extrusion in the shoreline). Here again, the structure is a "bar".

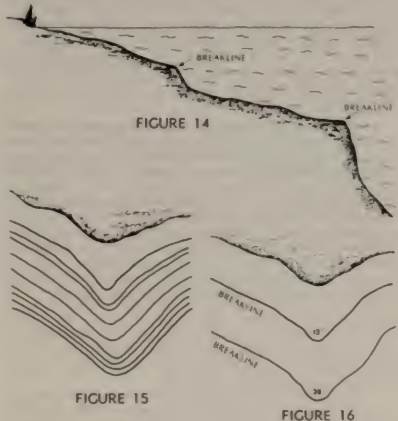


FIGURE 14

FIGURE 15

FIGURE 16

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Figure 14 shows a side view of this structure. In this view, we have pointed out two breaklines. A "Breakline" is the proper description in this case as the bottom has a sudden, or more rapid, change in depth.

The figure shows that the shallower breakline has a rapid increase in depth, but not necessarily a great change in depth. The deeper breakline also has a sudden change in depth, but in this case a large increase in depth. This illustrates how some breaklines do not change the depth a great deal, while in others the increase in depth is great.

Breaklines vary as to how sharp, or sudden, they break. Some drop off very rapidly, while others may be only a gentle slope.

In Figure No. 15 we see the same structure from a top view with all of the 5 foot contour lines drawn in. You would not be concerned with all of these depths, but would instead be concerned only with the areas on structure where fish could be found. In this particular figure, with no additional "breaks" present, the fish could be found at any breakline that exists. You should see that two breaklines occur, and they extend completely around the structure (or bar) — one appears to occur at the 10 foot depth, and the other at the 30 foot depth.

Figure 16 is the fisherman's view of the same structure. As already stated, you should be concerned with only the two breaklines. Upon closer observation, or by checking, you find the shallower breakline broke at 12 feet, and the deeper breakline at 28 feet. Note that the 28 ft breakline is also the "drop-off". "It would be at some spot on this breakline that the fish would first appear." In this case, if you found yourself in a situation where you had to wait for the fish to move, it would be on this particular breakline (28 ft.) that you would try to concentrate your efforts. It would be unwise to limit your waiting, or fishing, to the 12 ft. breakline, — because the fish may not come this far.

BREAKS

As fishermen, our concern is not entirely with breaklines and where, and how, the fish might make contact with them. Breaklines, by themselves, are not enough to attract or control the movements of the fish.

Our concern is that migration will come up far enough, or shallow enough, so that we can present lures properly. Many times the first breaklines the fish make contact with are too deep to work effectively. At times the distance be-

tween the breaklines may be so great, the fish aren't aware there exists a shallower, or additional ones. IF THE CONTACT POINTS ON STRUCTURE, OR BREAKLINES, COME TO A DEAD END, THEY WILL BE ELIMINATED BY THE FISH.

Let's look at Figure 16 again. I didn't state or show what the scale was, but it could be quite a distance between the two breaklines. Although the structure represented a "bar" or a ridge-like situation, it is possible the fish would not move toward the shallower breakline. The shallower breakline could be so far off, the fish could not SEE it from their position on the deeper breakline and would never know it existed for the fish to use this route toward the shallows, under these conditions, the bar would have to be narrow and ridge-like, with a fairly steep incline toward the shallows. This would give the structure definite features the fish could see would lead to the shallows (such as a short bar on a steep shore, or those found in bays, or coves.)

If this was a big wide bar, with only a gentle slope, and it had no visible route or "signposts", then we would have an entirely different situation.

The fish, with their survival instincts and with their reactions to weather and water conditions, will not use a structure (or route) if it is not well marked with visible bottom changes or objects that he can see and follow, or have the areas for "pausing" or "stopping". Areas without these necessities would be eliminated, by the fish, early in the life of a lake. It is in this sense that BREAKS become important.

BREAKS are changes and objects found on the bottoms. They create the visible difference that fish can SEE and use for the purpose of locating themselves. Breaks, as stated, can consist of many things; stumps, rocks, brush, eroded spots, sunken objects, etc. These are the things that guide fish when they make contact with the structure.

Let me take the structure (bar) as shown in Figure 14 (a side view), and Figure 16 (top view), and make a few changes, or additions. I will add a few "breaks" to the drawings.

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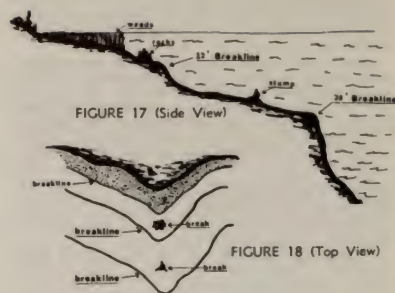


Figure 17 and figure 18 show that the breaks I added are in the form of a stump, which I placed between the two breaklines. A pile of rocks was added between the shallowest breakline and the third breakline, which was formed when I added a weedline to the shallows. Now this structure takes on an entirely new look. The route is now well marked for fish migration. But, better still, it is marked for you as a fisherman. You can now see or recognize the spots where the fish will be found.

In fishing this structure, there are five spots where you should concentrate your efforts. They are:

- 1 — The WEEDLINE.
- 2 — The two BREAKS — rocks and stumps.
- 3 — The two BREAKLINES.

These spots should be worked in the order they appear. Starting at the weedline (shallows) you should work progressively deeper until you have covered all the BREAKS and BREAKLINES to the point where you lose control.

If you have to wait until a movement occurs, you would concentrate your efforts at the deepest 'break' that you could present lures **CORRECTLY**. Do not concentrate on a 'break' so deep you cannot CONTROL your lure presentation. Hop-

hazard presentation on deep 'breaks' or 'breaklines' will not produce. **You may get by with faulty presentation in shallow or shallower water, but not downstairs.**

To be sure my previous statements on 'breaks' and 'breaklines' is driven home, let me take the subject a little further.

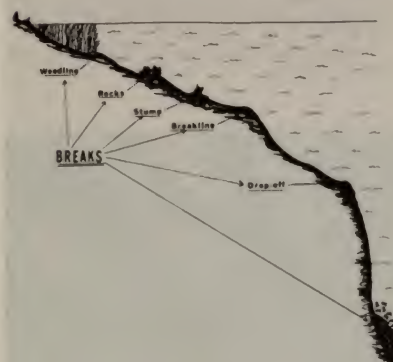


FIGURE 19

Figure No. 19 shows a side view of a good bar which contains some BREAKLINES and BREAKS that could be used by fish as they move on migration. To start, let's place the fish in their deep water sanctuary. **The weather and water is such that we get a full migration to the shallows.**

The migration begins. Their first move would be to the "contact point" on the drop-off (Breakline). They would PAUSE here for awhile, then move on to the next point — the next BREAKLINE. After another pause they would go

to the stump (BREAK) — then to the rocks (BREAK), with their last move going to the weedline (Breakline), with some scattering into or along the weedline. They would be entirely guided by these BREAKS. The fish would at all times know where they are, and would have no problems getting back quickly to the security of the deep water. In their movement back to deep water, there would be very little "pausing" on the way. At times, when the fish are "Spooked", or their migration disrupted at some point, they may drop back down, and stop at a deeper break or breakline, without going (immediately) all the way to their deep water sanctuary.

YOU, in your fishing, must be guided in the same manner as the fish.



CONTACT POINTS

"Breaks on A Breakline"

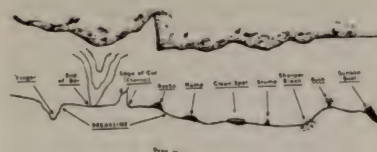


FIGURE 20

Figure 20 is a top view of a BREAKLINE. This breakline could have most any shape, and it could occur most any place in a body of water. It could represent one found on a long structure, such as a 'bar'. It could be one running completely around a lake, occurring at different depths. It could be representative of **any** breakline in a lake or reservoir. What I have to say about this particular breakline will apply to all breaklines, whatever their shape or position. But, for this study, let us view it as a breakline such as found along the edge of a channel. The breakline in Figure 20 is shown as being the "drop-off".

The question before us, "When the fish start moving from their deep water sanctuary, what do they head for?" To state it differently — "Where do the fish make CONTACT with the drop-off (breakline)?"

Different lakes and different conditions will determine just what 'thing' they head for, but in all cases it will be a BREAK of some kind.

In most cases the first break the fish SEES is a BREAKLINE. And, the first thing they head for is a BREAK on the BREAKLINE.

Figure 20 shows some "Break" types, that could be found on a "Breakline" — serving as CONTACT POINTS.

In Natural Lakes, the predominate breaks found on a breakline will be 'fingers', 'humps', 'end of bar' and 'sharper break'. In many cases a combination of these will exist. Regardless how deep the weedline might go, these will still be the 'contact points'. The weedline tho, often indicates to you the presence, or position of the 'contact points'.

In reservoirs (man-made lakes) you find most all of them, and in addition, combinations of the different types. You might ask, "Which one is the most important?"

The type of lake, or reservoir, and the bottom conditions would determine which type is more important, BUT, if you were a fisherman who fished a variety of Lakes and reservoirs, you would probably wind up looking for the "Sharper Break" in combination with a "Finger", or a "Hump". In other words, you would look for the 'finger' on a structure, with the 'sharper break' into deep water. Normally you would look for the LONGEST 'finger', with the SHARPEST break, into the DEEPEST water. This would give you the added feature "End of Bar".

On a 'hump', you would look for the "sharpest break" into the deepest water.

As a fisherman, MOST of the time, MOST of the fish you find, will be at a BREAK on a BREAKLINE.

What this further means, you can concentrate your efforts at the right place, regardless how long a breakline might be. You have to keep in mind at all times — **MOST of the time, MOST of the water contains no fish.**

The CONTACT POINT on a breakline or structure will remain the same until the 'break' on the breakline is removed, or 'something' (break) is added that would give the fish a better 'shot' at the breakline. This statement should indicate to you, that quite often the situation could be improved (for you) for the movement of the fish in a particular area, by the placing of "suitable" breaks. It should also indicate to you, that a spot on a breakline could go bad.

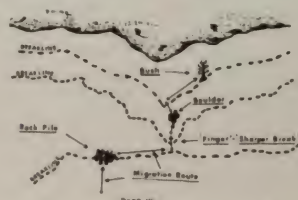


FIGURE 21

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Figure 21 should be of help in your further understanding of fish on a Breakline, and the part 'contact points' play. It shows a top view of a shoreline section, with several Breaklines occurring at different depths.

A breakline situation such as this, is more likely to occur in a "highland" type lake, rather than in a "flatland" type. The bottom is rather 'steep' — dropping off rapidly. These breaklines could probably be classified as "ledges", and most likely the depth would not vary very much at any spot along each.

Earlier when talking about movement of fish on a 'bar', I stated that the migration route may not always be straight, that the structure may bend to the left or right. Figure 21 is a good example of a crooked migration route, but in this case we are showing how the fish use the breaklines and breaks.

In looking at Figure 21, you might ask yourself, "Why did I catch the fish at that particular bush?"

Study this figure carefully. You will note the fish use the breakline as part of the route. This is the reason you will find fish (at times), scattered slightly along a breakline.



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BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR GOOD STRUCTURE

As discussed, there are many different type structures fish use in their movements and migrations. Each will have features entirely different from that of another. The shape, size, bottom conditions, breaks, breaklines, depths, etc. — all, in one sense, a completely new ball game.

As a fisherman, your degree of success will depend to a great extent upon your ability to interpret structure. One important phase being, whether it is good for the movements of fish, or whether it is bad. To state it another way, "Will the fish use it?"

In approaching this question of productive structure, I will make another statement at this time. "Fish will not migrate across a FLAT area which is void of breaks and breaklines".

Your reaction to this statement may well be, "You are repeating yourself again".

In a sense I am, but previously I was talking about "Breaks" and "Breaklines" as a route on structure and how fish used them in their migrations. HERE, I am talking about a FLAT.

With this firmly in your mind (I hope), I can now go to the statement I was leading up to. "IN ORDER FOR A STRUCTURE TO BE USED AS A MIGRATION ROUTE IT MUST HAVE IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO DEEP WATER". You may fail to get the significance of this statement, so again I will state it differently. "In order for a structure to be used as a migration route, IT MUST GO ALL THE WAY TO THE DEEP WATER". To be sure you fully understand this important feature, or requirement for good structure, let's look at some more drawings.

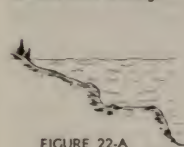


FIGURE 22-A

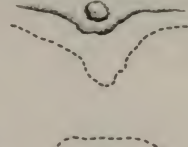
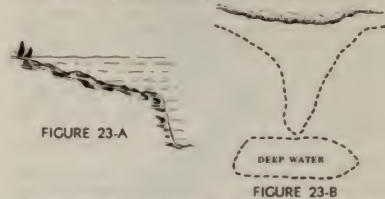


FIGURE 22-B

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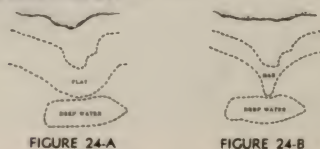
Figure 22-A is a side view of a "bar". Figure 22-B shows a top view of the same bar (Structure). In Figure 22-B the dotted lines represent **breaklines**. One occurs on the bar, and the other one is a "drop-off" at the deep water hole.

In both views, you will note that the "bar" does not reach the deep water (the home of the fish). The bar does not **GO ALL THE WAY**. A large **FLAT** exists between the end of the bar and the deep water.



To further illustrate, let's look at it again, but let me make a slight change. As you look at Figures 23-A (side view), and 23-B (top view), you will note a similar structure (bar), **BUT**, in this case you have an entirely different situation. Here the bar extends **ALL THE WAY** to deep water. The breakline becomes the "drop-off", and access to the structure, and to deep water, is readily and immediately available for the fish.

It should become obvious to you in the light of what has been said, the structure represented by Figures 23-A and 23-B would be the productive one. Quite often, this basic fact of good structure isn't obvious to a lot of fishermen. Many will spend an entire fishing day on a **good looking UNPRODUCTIVE bar**.



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As stated, **interpretation** is one of the most important keys to success. More will be said on the subject later on, but to further emphasize the point at this time, let's look at it further, with additional changes in the structure (bar).

As you look at Figure 24-A (top view), and Figure 24-B (top view), you should note that we have similar structure in the form of a bar. But, in this case, there is more than one breakline before reaching deep water.

If you examine the shallow sections of these two illustrations, you will see, both run out in a ridge-like manner, breaking off on the sides and the end. The bars and the shallower breaklines are practically identical.

In Figure 24-A, as you approach deep water, you find a second breakline. This second breakline, for all practical purposes, reaches the deep water. At one spot, it assumes the features of a "drop-off". **BUT**, between the first and second breakline, the bar "petered" out, creating a **FLAT**. Even tho the area has a breakline breaking rather directly into the deep water, it **does not make a good area for migration** to the bar. Why? Because the large flat area exists. The Structure does not go **all the way**. Fish will not cross the flat.

In Figure 24-B, the bar extends beyond the shallow breakline. The ridge continues on out until it reaches the second breakline, then breaks directly into the deep water. This structure would make a good migration route.

I'd like to cite a little actual experience here to further demonstrate a "must" for good structure.

A look of shock and disbelief came over Tom's face when I said, "You will never find any good largemouth bass on this structure".

The above remark came after I'd accepted an invitation to look over a section of one of the T. V. A. impoundments. I had been told about the great white bass fishing they were having on a particular underwater island or **HUMP**. A comment was, "We are having a ball with the white bass on this structure, and if you would show us how to catch largemouth bass, we would have it made".

When I'd finally gotten around to going there, and actually was fishing, I'd made the above comment. As I explained to Tom and his friends, they had forgotten one of the basic rules of structure fishing. **PRODUCTIVE STRUCTURE MUST HAVE IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO DEEP WATER**. This particular hump did not have this **KEY** ingredient. With the drawings, which follow, I tried to explain the situation.

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Although this hump might be productive for roving schools of smaller white bass, it would not produce lunker largemouth bass.

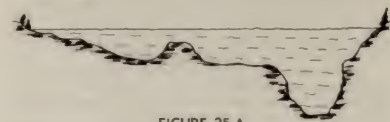
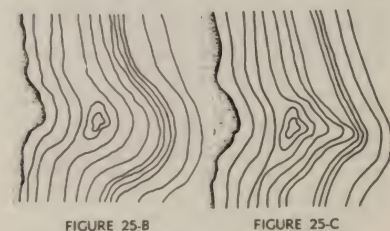


Figure 25-A shows a cross section or side view, of the area we fished. The hump is located quite some distance from shore and also from the channels. Figure 25-B shows a top view of the structure. You should note carefully the contour lines surrounding this hump. They show you that the hump suddenly emerges from a big, flat area. **There are no breaks on the flat area**. A big bass would never know this hump existed. There are no **SIGNPOSTS** leading to it.



Now, if it had looked like Figure No. 25-C — they would have had it made. The contours here show a nice ridge-like structure (bar) extends from the crown of the hump to the deep water, with a nice break at the end. **This hump would produce largemouth bass**.

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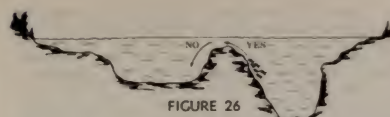


Figure 26 shows a side view, or cross section of an area in a lake. You will note that a sizable **HUMP** exists fairly close to the deep water.

Humps or underwater islands are important structures, regardless where, or at what depth they might occur. When used by fish on migration they serve as a stopping point and will usually hold a **concentration** of fish. This is because **fish do not drop down the backside of a hump**. The top of the hump becomes the end of their movement, unless they can see **standing breaks** to lead them further. They just will not strike off downhill to find shallower water. It doesn't make sense to them. If a fish could think and talk, he might say, "How can I go shallower by going deeper?"

To fully understand the subject I have been discussing, we need to pursue it still further.

When I made the statement that fish will not move across flats that are void of all signposts, I made it based on fact. Unless the bottom has some feature to guide the fish, they will not use it — they'll find one that does.

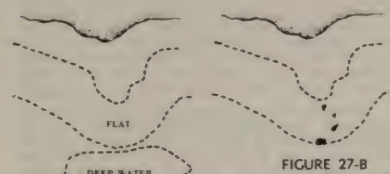


FIGURE 27-A

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Figure 27-A is a repetition of Figure 25-A, showing the "flat" the fish will not cross. What reason would he have to cross it? How is he to know, if he went 'north' for a certain distance, he would come upon a very nice "bar"? He might have a "homing" instinct, but not likely one in reverse.

Figure 27-B shows I have added some BREAKS to the flat. A pile of rocks was added to the deeper breakline where it broke into deep water. At a visible distance from the rocks, I added a sunken boat, still farther toward the end of the bar, a stump is shown. A bush was placed in sighting distance of the breakline to the bar.

NOW, the nice short bar next to the shoreline, could become productive.

Have you ever wondered why a particular structure in a new reservoir produces well for a few years then suddenly goes bad? Take a good look at Figure No. 27-B. As the lake gets older we'll assume the bush rots away. This would mean the migration would now stop at the stump. When the stump rots away, (this will occur later as it is deeper) then the migration would stop at the sunken boat. After the boat goes, they can see only the pile of rocks. Although the rocks could forever serve as contact point, it has now become a "dead-end".

What do the fish do now? They just find another route that provides them with visible breaks which will lead them. Here-in, lies one of the reasons for a lake getting 'tough' after a few years.

You, as a knowledgeable fisherman, should note any decrease in productivity of a structure. If it was in a situation such as Figure 27-B, you would work the 'breaks' to see if there was any change in the extent of the migration. You would certainly check it out before giving it up as a lost cause. This situation would be no different from a "short" movement on any structure. Later, if you determined it was a complete wash-out, you would look for the new route. It should be found in the immediate area.

All the remarks and figures I have made in this particular study, should have pointed out, that all areas that might be considered as good, will not be GOOD, unless the fish knows it exists. The only way he can know a particular structure exists, — he either has to see it from the beginning, or the things he does see, will finally lead him to a particular spot. This is great, because you and I can do the same thing.

Spoonplugging
Perry, Buck
Clay Print. Co.
1973 (1st Ed. Sept. 1973)
T. Pap.

ture found in reservoirs up all that has been all it "DELTA" describe a lake bottom structure type is the most nent because this par- reservoirs, and more structure to produce in difficult to find, and s a structure situation about. His knowledge fails to realize why, in a draws a blank along reas that are so "fishy" asons given above, the a important, is the fact, n anything I know. DELTA type structure, Lowlands or Flatlands e that does not contain

re often built in a valley th sides of the stream. ne farming lands before flats were covered with s removed, but in some,

they were left standing.

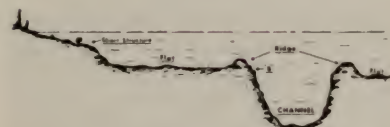


FIGURE 28

Figure 28 shows a cross-section, or side view of a typical 'Delta' situation.

This is the picture of a 'delta'. 1 - A channel (old stream bed). 2 - A ridge, or hump, running along the edge of the channel. 3 - Big flats behind the ridges. 4 - Short structure along the shorelines.

The ridge, or hump, along the edge of the stream channel is a natural thing to occur. Weather and water conditions, plus the growth normally found along the banks of a stream, in time, built up the ridge-like structure. In some cases it is rather pronounced, while in others only slight. The widths of the flats will vary. They are often wide on both sides of the channel, while in other cases, one side will be bigger, than the other (due to the 'wandering' of the original stream). At times, the ridge and flat will occur on one side of the stream only, the other side being rather steep, with the channel close to shore.



FIGURE 29

Figure 29 is a top view of a "Delta" reservoir. Lakes created in different terrain will have the 'delta' situation in various locations. In some Flatland reservoirs, it will occur practically all over the lake. In others, it will occur in the lower, or wider sections of the lake only. In some Lowland lakes it will occur only in the upper sections.

The ridges can be rather uniform, and in instances may run a mile or more without an interruption or break in them.

Normally, where the 'delta' is a predominate feature of a reservoir, most of the structure can be reached for

the presentation of lures, both casting and trolling. But, in some cases, and areas, the structure is so deep, it cannot be reached effectively.

As stated earlier, this type of impoundment, or bottom make-up, can give a fisherman fits. This is especially true if the flats are full of standing trees. Many fishermen do not realize, or they forget, the channel in this situation is the "home" of the fish. At times these channels are located a great distance from shore. The 'delta' situation stresses quite strongly the fact the shoreline serves only two functions; 1 - It serves as a reference point, 2 - It holds the water in the lake. The fish would never know it existed unless the roads (bottom structure) pointed "that-a-way".

Most fishermen are not fully aware of the movement of the fish. He has no idea as to where the fish will be when they move from the channel during a migration period. In other words, many do not know where to fish in a 'Delta' situation.

Look at figure 28 again. Due to water levels in the past, there occurs on the channel side of the ridge, narrow 'shelf' like areas, or breaklines that run all along the side of the ridge. Often, these breaklines ('B' Figure 28) appear as a bunch of 'steps'.

These breaklines will have numerous "breaks" in the form of eroded spots, cave-ins, stumps, logs, debris, etc., which serve as "contact points". It would be normal, with no problems, for the fish to move to the breaklines, and then onto the ridge (hump).

The migration situation changes abruptly when the fish reach the top of the ridge (hump). The top of the ridge could come to a DEAD END.

Your reaction to this statement most likely will be, "Why do you say this?"

In asking this question, it shows me that you have not gotten the messages in the book up to this point. If you did get them, at the time of 'reading' you have now completely forgotten them, or you are unable to 'mesh' or relate them, to 'size' up the situation.

This type book does not allow me to elaborate or expand on any particular subject. I can only cover the BASICS briefly, and I hope to the point. Besides, even this amount may be too much for the first dose.

People as a whole are not prone to discipline themselves. They tend to take the easy route. Many, have to have things spelled out in great detail on a lot of situations, before they

get the point. Much too often, an individual will READ a book of this nature, and not STUDY it. **Most have to be TAUGHT before they get the message.**

These are but a few of the reasons, I have had the formal schools and correspondence courses. MUCH more can be said — basics expanded, greater detail, more situations, personal or specific problems dealt with, — etc.

A formal EDUCATION tells you where to find, or get, the answers, but KNOWLEDGE is a 'horse of another color'. Your interpretation and solution, to a fishing situation, shouldn't have to be thought about, or require you to go to a text or library to find the answers. Your interpretation, and what you have to do to solve a situation should require no thinking, but should be automatic. You shouldn't ever be aware that maybe a **problem** exists. This is KNOWLEDGE, and this is the reason I keep saying, "Knowledge is the key to fishing success". Your question reminds me of the fellow that had a fortune 'stashed' away, and was starving to death. If you don't "get" what I say, I'm just spinning my wheels

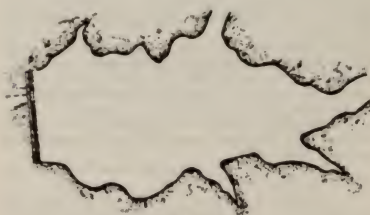


FIGURE 30

To be sure you understand that problems CAN exist in a 'delta' for most fishermen, and to help drive home a few points, look at Figure 30.

Here is a reservoir that was built in a Lowland or a Flatland region — A DELTA SITUATION.

Let's assume, for the moment, that you are either a "greenhorn", a fisherman with no Spoonplugging knowledge, or even one of those who **cells** himself a "structure" fisher-

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man, and who has purchased the most elaborate fishing gear and *jig* available.

Just looking at that big wide rascal out there, scares the pants off a lot of fishermen. What do you do? Where do you start?

Most likely (from what I see) you would spend your time fishing the shorelines, or zooming from 'point' to 'point', or 'spot' to 'spot', casting to the VISIBLE objects in the areas.

From what you have already learned (knowledge), you should know, this type fishing can be a 'hit or miss' proposition, and the guy who caught the most fish on a particular day, probably covered more miles and made more casts. He wasn't as thorough as his **grandfather**, but he sure got around faster.

Take it from me, you can face some problems on a 'delta' lake, if you don't know the score — for that matter, on any lake. By the time you have finished "studying" this book in its entirety, you will probably arrive at the same conclusion I have. For the average fisherman — most of the time fishing is lousy, then it gets worse. The fish with his instincts for survival, plus the changing weather and water conditions, and the **lack of fishing knowledge**, makes good catches scarce and difficult under the best conditions. Then the conditions get BAD. Most of the time only a handful of the fishermen make a good catch, and most of the time NOBODY makes a good catch. If this doesn't indicate successful fishing is tough and then gets tougher, I don't know what does.

Now, let us get back to the question you asked — "Why could the top of the ridge, become a 'dead-end' in a 'delta' situation?"

Several reasons could throw a 'monkey wrench' into the machinery at this point. We have already discussed them, but I'll state them again. 1 - **The fish do not move down the backside of a hump.** 2 - **He will not cross a big 'wide-open' flat.** 3 - **The long distances involved.**

There are mainly two things that you should be concerned with, when faced with a Delta.

1 - "Where on the ridge would I concentrate my efforts?"

You gotta keep in mind, that fish do not move all the time. Lucky is the guy who finds the fish up and moving when he takes the first stab at a structure. Most of the time, he will have to exercise patience for the fish to move. With the factors involved here — the movement habits

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of the fish, and the distances involved (length of ridge and distance from shore), you have to make your major efforts in the most potential spots, if you expect to make good catches.

2 - "Where, or what structure, would I fish along the shoreline?"

Remember you are faced with the fact that long sections of the shoreline will be "blocked", due to the fish not going down the backside of the hump and striking out across the flat, to reach the shoreline. You are also faced with the fact, that the ridge (or hump) can be so deep you can't work it effectively, and you are FORCED to work the shoreline. AND, you must not forget, at times the conditions and migrations are so good, the fish move beyond the ridge to the shoreline structures.

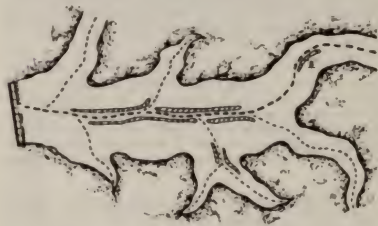


FIGURE 31

Figure 31, shows a top view of another "Delta" type lake. This figure shows the side 'feeder' stream channels.

If you have done your 'home work', you should immediately see the 'secret', or solution, to a Delta situation. It is the side feeder stream, or 'wash', that has cut a channel to some degree through the flat bottom, and the ridge (hump).

These 'Cuts' would be the prime spots where fish would make contact with the breaklines, and the ridge. The breaklines along the side feeder channels, would provide the major routes for the fish to migrate to the shoreline structures.

In Figure 31, I may have omitted some of the 'delta', or

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structure, that occur in some areas. But, in most ALL cases there will be structure and fish migration where two streams, or channels, come together. These are prime areas to fish in ANY water — lake, reservoir, river, etc. These areas provide the "breaks", "differences", and conditions so vital to the movements of the fish. This also makes it easy for you and I to find the good areas.

I have marked, with a "B", a Delta situation where the hump, or ridge, occurs only on one side of the channel. In the early life of a reservoir, this ridge may get migrations due to the breaks and breaklines present. The "Yearlings" have not grown up, and all undesirable areas have not been eliminated. It may be remotely possible, if this structure was located in extra deep water, it might get limited migration, at certain weather and water conditions — primarily, the winter time. But, in looking at this ("B" Figure 31), with no breaks and breaklines to control the migrations farther, this "hump" would in time be eliminated by the fish. It represents a "dead-end".

You might wonder how the feeder cuts (side channels) are found. Or, you might think your lake doesn't have any feeder cuts, or feeder streams, due to it being in a dry section of the country. Believe you me — YOU HAVE FEEDER CUTS. There has never been a lake built where at some time in the past, heavy rains or erosion hasn't created feeder cuts. All you have to do is look toward shore. You will see evidence of where water flowed at one time or other. It may be a slight valley, a hollow, ravine, or a cove. It will show where water has moved toward the main valley at sometime. They may be few and far between, but they WILL exist — you can bet on it. The terrain, plus a little common sense calculations should tell you approximately where the 'cut' enters the main channel.

In years past I have been on Delta type lakes where the feeder cuts were practically non-existent. Some fish were found on the breaklines and humps along the edge of the channel, but the pickings were slow. In all cases I found it wise to take the time to locate the 'cuts'. At times, it took a lot of 'riding' and close observation of the shoreline before one was found. In all cases they represented the best spots in the lake, and well worth the time spent in locating them. While your shoreline observations **cannot be eliminated**, today's Depth Sounders makes it an easy matter to find the ridges and cuts.

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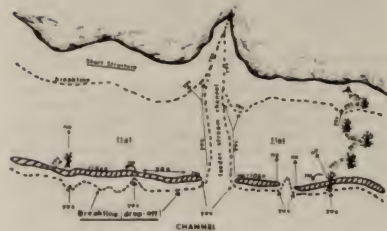


FIGURE 32

Figure 32, is a top view of a portion of a lake — a DELTA situation.

I have marked the drawing with many arrows, each marked with a "YES" or a "NO". The "YES" says the fish WILL go this way. The "NO" says he will NOT.

Study this Figure very carefully. Take EACH arrow, and if you can fully answer, to your satisfaction, why the "YES" and "NO" is correct, then you have gotten the important message of what has been said so far in this book. If you cannot answer each 'arrow', then go back and re-study. You may never fish a lake of this nature, but that's beside the point, you consider this as a 'term quiz' on Spoonplugging (fishing knowledge).

There may be one more question unanswered when you complete this quiz, — "What do I do when I am in an area and find the channel and structure so deep I can't reach or work it effectively, AND the weather has the movements so short, there is no migration to the shallower shore-line structures?"

This question can be answered very quickly. You must do the **migrating yourself**. Go toward the headwaters, or more shallow sections, where the short movements CAN be reached.

WEATHER

When studying the many conditions of weather, and effects it has on your success or failure, you are faced with the fact that conditions are not stable. Changes can occur from hour to hour, day to day, week to week or month to month. Just about the time you have a situation worked out, know the area, what structures are best, what lures are working best, and have considerable success in the area, BANG! — the whole picture changes.

We all understand that WEATHER can change. And that these changes can affect our fishing approach as well as our success. If you are around a group of fishermen very long, the subject of weather is bound to come up. Weather probably is used more as an excuse for not catching fish than any other of the multitude of excuses.

I could talk all day about weather and how it might affect fishing, but at this time we will go into those aspects of weather that should be considered, and the things most likely to be misunderstood.

I betcha when I started speaking of weather the first thing to pop into your mind was TEMPERATURE. Temperature affects fishing in two ways. One; it can make it pleasant or unpleasant. At times it may be so hot or so cold it just isn't any fun to be out on the water. Second; it may have an effect on the fish.

In considering how temperature might effect fish, or fishing, let's consider a few things.

We should realize first of all that a fish is a cold blooded animal. His metabolism is slower at low temperature. If the water is 45 degrees, so is the fish. Fish, so far as comfort is concerned, is comfortable at ANY temperature. What temperature does to a fish is to slow down or speed up body functions. His metabolism is slower at low temperature and faster at higher temperature. If the temperature is low, the activity is slow. As the temperature goes up, so does the body activity. If a fish is in cold water, digestion of food is slowed, growth is slowed, and movement is certainly slowed. But as temperature goes up, then all of these processes speed up.

It therefore stands to reason the greatest activity — digestion, growth and movement, will occur in the warmer conditions. This is true. He moves better, fights better, eats better, grows better, and can more easily be caught. But remember, at low or high temperature he is still comfortable.

Recently, I read an article where some fishermen were

telling about a successful fishing trip in one of the midwest reservoirs. They had good luck in the coves, where a feeder stream was located. The story was quite good — up to a point where they gave credit for their success by saying, "The fish had moved into the coves seeking the warmer water of the feeder stream."

In other words, what they were saying was that a group of shivering bass, out in the cold, main part of the lake, got their heads together and one said, "Hey you'se guys — I know where there's a cove where the water's warmer. Let's go over there and play around in that good, warm water I'm freezing to death out here."

Now — what are the facts about this situation? In the first place the fish were perfectly comfortable where they were. In the second place they had no idea what warmer or colder water was, nor where it might be located. Two things are involved here. The SEASONAL migration of fish just happened to put them into the coves at that particular time. They did not have any choice in the matter. Once they were there, the warmer water formed a break with the colder water. The temperature of this warmer water put more zip or "spisinktom" into them. They were not as dormant as the fish in the colder water. They became easier to catch, and were sitting ducks for the fishermen. The "break" that was formed merely locked them in and they were more ready to take a lure.

I am not going to discuss how temperature affects the amount of gases that a liquid can absorb, other than the fact, weather conditions may be such that the amount of oxygen in the water could affect fish movements. In some isolated cases, depth and speed controls, or presentation of lures could be affected. A Spoonpluggger would not be concerned as he would be checking the controls to the fullest extent anyway.

During your fishing you should not think of WEATHER in terms of temperature. This does not mean changes in temperature will not affect fish, nor does it mean the fisherman doesn't change his tactics. (Later on you'll find if you present your lures and bait properly you'll automatically take care of temperature). YOU SHOULD VIEW WEATHER (and TEMPERATURE) IN TERMS OF LIGHT.

With this thought in mind we can now make a hand rule. THE LIGHTER OR BRIGHTER IT IS, THE TOUGHER THE FISHING WILL BE. THE DARKER THE CONDITIONS, THE BETTER IT WILL BE.

It would be hard to recall all the times in my travels and fishing where the mistaken ideas on weather helped create the desired reaction from the fishermen. I can't recall all the times I have fished on a dark, cloudy, or rainy day, and where the subsequent catch, not only shook up the fishermen, but caused them to make the comment, "Did you see the TERRIBLE weather under which he made that catch? He was the only one crazy enough to go out in that stuff. Wonder what he would do under GOOD conditions?"

Needless to say, I didn't enlighten them on what constitutes GOOD and BAD weather in fishing.

I have no way of knowing how many types of weather conditions might occur during a fishing season. One look at any weather map will show all types of high or low pressure areas, several kinds of 'fronts,' storms, hot areas, cold areas or wet and dry areas. You name it — they show it.

We have to pick out one of these conditions for a starting point. One that you can use as a guide to your fishing. One that will be the key for determining your chances for success, and the one that will let you plan your tactics. In other words, we have to set up another 'rule of thumb', so to speak. This base is a COLD FRONT.

It should be noted at this time that the word COLD does not necessarily mean there is a big drop in temperature. The front is actually the dividing line between two masses of air. The difference in temperature of these two masses can vary, at times it will be great, while at others hardly noticeable. The main difference between the two air masses is that one is warmer, holding a higher moisture content, while the other is a drier mass of cooler air. The former is usually associated with a LOW, while the latter is associated with a HIGH. The masses of air which move through the United States are normally from the west to the east. This direction can vary, but for all practical purposes this is the dominant direction.

The front itself is usually associated with very rough weather, such as heavy rain, squall lines (thunder storms), etc. This is especially true when there is a great temperature difference between the two masses of air. If the temperature difference is slight, these fronts are much less discernible.

When observing or viewing a COLD FRONT, here again, you do not view it in terms of temperature, but instead relate it to LIGHT conditions. There is a relationship between the light and the temperature, and if there is a great drop in temperature after the front passes, and it lasts for a long period, the light will be affected accordingly.

Using the COLD FRONT as our base, or starting point, let's take a look at it in terms of light. The prefrontal conditions are normally dark conditions, with heavy cloud cover, etc. After the front goes through, the cooler mass of drier air moves in. You will normally have a completely washed out condition with a bright, clear sky.

Those familiar with Spoonplugging have heard that fishermen should be aware of COLD FRONTS. Pre-frontal conditions will give good fish movements, post-frontal conditions will give bad, or little movement of fish.

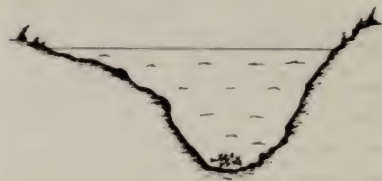


FIGURE 33

Figure 33 shows the reaction of fish to the passing of a cold front. The fish drop-off into their winter, or cold front position. They become quite dormant, with little or no movement. This condition could exist for several days, depending upon the severity of the front.

Until the front went through, the movement of fish was good. If there was any cloud cover behind the front, there still could have been some scattered movements, but after these clouds pass, the finest fishermen could be "skunked." Weather wise it is a bright, cool, clear, day. It's the kind of day most fishermen would choose to go fishing.

A movement of the fish will not occur again until the temperature stabilizes, or begins to rise, the sky shows traces of haze, or high cirrus clouds begin to appear. Normally, by the third day, after the front passes a change will take place.

You might be tempted to say here, "But you said not to pay any attention to the temperature. And you just made the statement about it having to warm up before the fish

will start to move again." I believe if you'll go back and read carefully, you'll find I stated there was a relationship between the light conditions and the temperature. You can possibly note any temperature change, but I doubt if you can note any light change. Let's look at it another way. We'll place the fish in the COLD FRONT POSITION. In most fresh water this will be as far down as they can go. In some reservoirs the water is so deep they are not likely to go all the way to bottom. But I have observed bass at well over 100 feet. But whatever the final depth, the fish are not likely to feel any warming trend when it occurs. Water just doesn't work that way. Warming water does not sink — it remains on top, and the fish won't know anything about it. BUT, he will instantly be alerted of any change in LIGHT CONDITIONS. I say, "The best movement of all species of fish, freshwater or saltwater, will occur on the hottest muggiest day of the year."

How many times have you experienced a "dry run?" At times it has taken place after hearing that for several days the fish were biting like mad. When this kind of news gets out, it excites the adrenal glands of any red-blooded fisherman. Your fishing fever begins to soar and you quickly plan a trip for two days hence, Saturday, your day off. You begin to worry the next day when it starts raining cats and dogs. You're hoping it will stop before your trip tomorrow.

Boy — are you happy when you wake up the next morning and see the early light of dawn promises sunshine, and a beautiful, cool, clear day. You can't wait to get on the water to slay some of those big, lunkers. Then, along about noon, you begin to wonder if you're using the right lure — you haven't had a touch. You start throwing everything in your tackle box at 'em. In late afternoon you score — a great big, nine incher. All the way home you're thinking up excuses for your failure. But mainly, you're "lambasting" those lying fishermen, or reporters, who said, "They're biting like mad."

What you've failed to realize is that a complete weather change has occurred since those reports. A COLD FRONT had passed through, and had changed the picture completely. The moral of the story is when you hear about those fantastic catches, and you're planning a trip later on, be sure to check a weather map before setting your hopes too high.

Let's look at the situation you just faced. The days of the great catches, you heard about, were during PRE-FRONTAL conditions of a COLD FRONT. The cold front hit Friday, producing heavy rains. During the night the front

went through bringing in the dry, clear, cooler air mass for your fishing on Saturday.

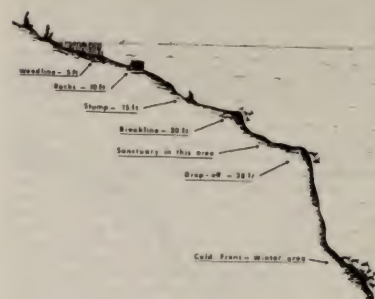


FIGURE 34

In Figure 34 we have a cross section of a structure which is used as a migration route.

A COLD FRONT comes through the area. How did the fish react to it's passing? They dropped to a depth of 60 feet or more, and the small fish dropped to the 20 foot breakline. Only two of the larger fish are still hanging around the drop-off, but shortly they too will join the others in the hole. This is the condition we normally find the first day following a cold front. Fish deep and inactive. This condition could last into the second or third day, depending on how severe (difference in temperature of the two air masses) the cold front was, and how fast these masses are moving. But normally, by the second or third day, this condition will begin to change.

The day following a cold front normally has a clear, blue, washed out sky. A beautiful day, and usually with high winds. Fish? DEEP and inactive.

The second day — clear. Sometime during the day "snow ball" clouds appear. A little drop in wind is noted,

with little or no increase in temperature. Fish? Movement practically nil. Maybe some of the smaller fish move up as far as the stump area (15 feet) and a couple of the larger fish move up to the drop-off (38 feet) for a short period.

The third day — there's an increase in temperature, wind drops further, high cirrus clouds begin to form, and some haze is noted. Fish? The mass moves back to their sanctuary, with the yearlings moving slightly shallower towards the stump. If there is any further movement this day, it will be short, and no mass migration. Two or three large fish may go as far as the 20 foot breakline for a short period.

The effect of the COLD FRONT has now passed. From this point on we will have a normal movement and migration pattern. But to carry the effects of weather a little further, we need to note movements over the next several days.

The fourth day — a further increase in temperature with additional haze and high cirrus clouds and diminishing winds. Fish? At mid-morning a movement period occurs. The yearling fish move up to the rocks and weedline. The mass of the large fish move up to the 20 foot breakline with a few moving onto the stump. They may stay for a period of 30 minutes before returning to the deep water sanctuary. Around mid-afternoon they migrate again. They move to the 20 ft breakline, PAUSE for a spell, then move on up to the stump, with a few moving as far as the rocks. They are active and may stay somewhat longer than during the morning movement.

During this better weather condition, such as mentioned above, the yearling fish will remain for a longer period in the shallows, and their return to deep water may not exceed the stump area.

The fifth day — no morning change in the weather from the previous day. Fish? The morning movement is a repetition of the day before. But — by noon another layer of clouds is moving in under the high cirrus, and the day becomes quite muggy. Some of the clouds moving in are on the dark side. Fish? At 3:30 p.m. a full migration occurs. The mass of fish pass the stump area and proceed to the rocks (any "lunkers" in the school may remain at the stump), with a few larger fish scattering into or along the weedline. The fish may stay in this area for an hour or more.

The double cloud cover, which moved in on the 5th day, is an excellent condition. The additional "filtering" of the light gives a much better movement than a single layer. This would seem to indicate that the higher the moisture content the better "filter" there is for those portions of light that are the "culprits."

The sixth day — heavy threatening clouds and impending rain. In midmorning the rain starts. Fish? They have already moved to the shallows and are biting like crazy. Good action occurs for most of the day, with peaks occurring at 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

The seventh day dawns bright and clear. The fishermen get skunked.

There is no set pattern as to the time, strength, distances, conditions, etc. to a cold front, each will be different. The effects could last for shorter or longer periods. The reaction of the fish to each will vary. The example (Figure 34), shows the effects before, during, and after a cold front. In some areas, the fronts are fewer and farther apart, while in others they come every third or fourth day for a large part of the season. This means the fishermen in these areas must "be on the ball" to make consistent catches. Just about the time the fish start moving enough to catch, — "wham!" — a cold front, and they start over again.

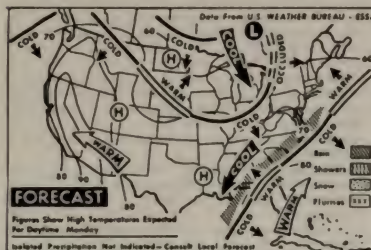
Cold fronts and light conditions affect ALL species of fish, freshwater or saltwater. Some are affected to a greater degree than others. The only fish that is noticeably active right after a cold front, is the carp. Many times these fish can be seen jumping following a cold front, and I have often seen fishermen wasting a lot of time and effort trying to catch them, because they thought they were bass or some other game fish.

Let's consider the major species of freshwater fish that would be less affected, or which would be first to start moving after a cold front. We could place them in this order, first, northern and walleye, white bass, smallmouth and largemouth. Trout could be placed in the range of white bass or walleyes. Thus, if you have a lake which contains all species, do not expect all of them to reappear at the same time. After the northers and walleyes start moving it could be several days later before the bass showed.

Before there is any great movement or migration there will be some scattered movement of individual fish — mainly the smaller fish of the species. It appears that small fish are not affected as much as larger fish. Also, small fish are not too compatible with the larger fish, and they head for the shallows when the smallest movement is made by the larger fish. For whatever reason, the fish you are likely to contact first, after a cold front will be the smaller fish.

A good Spoonplugger will become very much aware of weather conditions that affect the movements of fish. Not only will he observe the conditions that exist on each trip,

but he will spend time studying weather maps and weather forecasts. His constant awareness will enable him to relate weather conditions to the movements of fish, and he will, in turn, go about his fishing in a precise manner. He will soon get to know if he's wasting his time at any particular presentation. He will be able to test the water more thoroughly and a great deal faster than he has in the past. He will get to know, WHERE, WHAT and HOW to spend his time.



The above is a weather map that can be found in most local newspapers.

In studying weather maps, there are questions that you should ask yourself; such as: How should fishing be today in this area? Two days hence? What are the fishing prospects in Dallas, Chicago, Charlotte, Orlando, Cleveland, St. Paul, Milwaukee, Boston, Los Angeles, etc.

FORECASTS: Tomorrow calls for considerable cloudiness and mild with a chance of showers. The following day the skies clearing with a cooling trend. Question: Should I go fishing tomorrow or wait a couple days?

Vicinity calls for sunny skies and a little warmer today, fair and not so cold tonight. Tomorrow will bring variable cloudy skies and mild temperature. Question: What were the fishing chances the last few days? The next few days? Calls for sunny skies and cool temperatures

today and tonight. Tomorrow will be fair and warmer with increased cloudiness. Latter part of week calls for a warming trend, increased cloudiness with a chance of rain. Question: Is today a good time to go fishing? Should I plan a trip later in the week? Continued hot and dry. Some early morning haze. Sunrise 5:15, humidity 10 percent, Sunset 8:50 PM, chance of rain zero. Questions: What time of day should I go fishing? Would the lower end of the reservoir be better than the upper end? Which would be better, casting or trolling?

- In this weather section you should have learned this:
- 1 - A fish is _____ in ANY water temperature
 - 2 - _____ patterns govern fish movements, not temperature
 - 3 - Do not think of weather in terms of temperature, but in terms of _____
 - 4 - If the sky is 'washed' out, the fishing will be _____
 - 5 - The weather 'key' to your fishing will be the _____
 - 6 - Post-frontal conditions can give _____ fish movements
 - 7 - You should never expect any two movements to occur at the same _____, or for the _____ distance
 - 8 - Cold fronts affect _____ fish species
 - 9 - Some species will move _____ after a front passes than others
 - 10 - Weather will determine my approach, or tactics, to fishing, as it will _____ where the fish will be



WATER COLOR

In selecting fishing waters, a little more knowledge is needed other than just knowing it is wet and that fish swim in it.

Most fishermen have the wrong idea about "good looking water". They see a crystal clear body of water and their reaction is: "Oh Boy! — look at that beautiful fishing water". Over the years fishermen have gotten the idea that "clear water" means GOOD fishing. They couldn't be more wrong.

In the study of water color, we approach the subject from the same standpoint we did in Weather Conditions. That is, in terms of LIGHT. We should think of it as how much light penetrates the water. The MORE penetration the worse the condition. The LESS penetration the better the condition. CLEAR WATER means deep fish, short migrations, slow growth and reproduction, increased weed and moss growth, and usually more water skiers. It means more of everything that spells trouble for you as a fisherman.

The more dingy, cloudy, or darker the water is the better the conditions for fishing. So — a Spoonplugger will pay as much attention to his water color selection as he will to anything, — gear, methods, weather, structure, etc. If the selection of water color is not considered, he is asking for troubles which may be avoided.

I am not saying that clear water does not contain fish. What I am saying is, that water clarity will control or determine **how deep** fish are, — where he starts from (sanctuary), just how shallow he comes on migration, and how long he stays.

Presentation of lures (or bait), and interpretation of the deeper structures can be very difficult. Which means, if you are 'stuck' with a deep clear lake, you must take **more** time in studying the deeper structures. It means, you must work **longer** and put forth **more** effort in presenting lures **more** correctly in deep water — if you expect any degree of success.

Your reaction might be; if this is so, why not fish at night only? Hold on a minute! I did not say an absence of light, as such, I said a light **condition**. As I stated previously, light, as we know it, is made up of a lot of parts.

The reason fish are caught at night occasionally is due to a movement of fish having occurred. The absence of **certain** light caused the migration to come **far enough** for the fisherman to make contact with the fish.

To clarify this, let's say you are fishing a deep clear lake. If a movement occurs in the middle of the afternoon you

might not be aware of it, because the fish did not migrate up to where you were fishing. If you stayed on the lake into the night, you would draw a blank, because the fish had already moved, and probably would not move again until the next morning.

When you are faced with deep clear lakes, fishing at night does have its good points, but it does not mean the fish will move every night, regardless what the weather and water conditions might be. At certain periods during mid-summer, the major movements may occur at night. If you are experiencing troubles in the daytime, check it at **daylight**. This should indicate the movement pattern, and you can fish accordingly. BUT, you must remember, any sort of movement pattern can change overnight — it usually does — at the first weather change.

Just don't forget, that clear water can mean the movements are not as predictable, they occur deeper, for a shorter distance, and for less time than those in water of less clarity. It is for this reason, I consider the selection of water color, as the most important thing that you can do to make a good catch. You can't control the weather, the water conditions, the movements of the fish or his appetite, BUT you can control in most instances the water color.

In time, a good Spoonplucker, can work out ANY water. If it's clear, it takes a little longer. He will work hard and become good in his interpretation and presentations.

Fortunately, the fisherman does not have to limit himself to just clear conditions. He usually has a choice of different bodies of water, or the **SEASONAL CHANGES** in water color that occur in both natural and man-made lakes. In the natural lakes there is a degree of change due to algae growth, pollution, boat activity, wind, and rain run-off. In artificial reservoirs there is a seasonal change, and in addition, very few reservoirs exist that do not have different water color in different areas. Normally, the upper part of a reservoir will have a darker color due to the feeder streams. A good rule to follow is to move toward the headwaters of the main channel or feeder streams when seeking darker water. This could also be true when the reverse is desired.

There are, however, some areas where a fisherman does not have access to a great variety of water. He is limited to water in his area that does not change during the season — a stabilized water color. If this is the problem he should realize it and fish accordingly. For instance, if the only available water is clear and deep, he knows from the study of how light effects fish, that he would have to expect the

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fish to be deep most of the time, and that he would have to present the lures properly. If this proves too difficult, he would put the emphasis on picking the right water conditions, such as cloudy, hazy, or rainy days, or fish early or late, or at night so the clear water was partially offset by the darker conditions.

Most of the time you will be faced with too much clarity. But, in some sections of the country, at certain periods of the year, you may face water which is too muddy. The entire lake may be affected, but still, some sections will have a greater degree of clarity (less muddy) than others. Most of the time the problem is not finding waters with more clarity, but rather finding the more dingy areas. Your selection of water color will have a definite bearing on your catches. It could spell the difference between catching fish or not catching fish. It will determine whether or not fishing is easy or tough.

In order to have a basic understanding of water clarity, I will classify it as per color. Each of these colors could be lighter or darker, depending on where it is located, the type of soil, or the amount of run-off from the surrounding land, or the color of streams feeding it. Some would vary due to the amount of algae growth or "bloom."

I put water color into five categories

- 1 - Clear.
- 2 - Yellow-green.
- 3 - White-sandy.
- 4 - Red-sandy.
- 5 - Brown-cypress.

To make it better for you to understand your particular situation I will now reclassify the above list in the order of "goodness" when fishing. That is, water that gives the best movements, greatest quantity and quality, and greater ease in the catching.

- 1 - White-sandy (milky)
- 2 - Red-sandy.
- 3 - Yellow-green.
- 4 - Brown-cypress.
- 5 - Clear.

White and red-sandy colored water is not available in some areas, as they are colors normally found in man-made reservoirs, rather than in natural lakes. Natural lakes more often fall into the clear to yellow-green classifications. But some natural lakes, have a white-sandy, yellow-green appearance.

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Walleyes and northerners are indigenous to the sections of the country where natural lakes are abundant, so the first choice for these fish would be the yellow-green (if white-sandy not available). The same preference (yellow-green) would hold true for bass, or other species found in these areas.

WEEDS vs. WATER COLOR

You can relate weed growth to the type of structure and bottom conditions which are present in any lake you fish. Muck or soft bottom (mud) support a great weed growth, while a rocky or firm, sandy bottom would not be conducive to heavy weed growth. The abundance or absence of **weeds could therefore give you a pretty good picture of bottom conditions and the type of structures you can expect in any lake.**

In evaluating clear water versus dark water, in relationship to weed growth, a simple rule emerges: **The CLEARER the water the GREATER the weed growth; the DARKER the water the LESS weed growth.**

Now let's look at weed growth in relation to our listing of water colors. If a lake is extra clear, weeds could go down to 15 or 20 feet, with moss going down to even greater depths. (The degree of short moss is a pollution problem and should not be confused with water clarity).

If the water is clear (not extra clear) weeds could go down to 12 or 14 feet. In lighter yellow-green lakes, weed growth can go down to 8 or 10 feet. While in the darker yellow-greens, weed growth could cut off around 6 to 7 feet. If the darker yellow-green is mixed with a white-sandy or red-sandy you could expect the weedline to stop at 3 to 4 feet. And when you get into the red-sandy or white-sandy, you can forget about a weed situation.

In the brown-cypress, weeds are generally confined to the first 3 or 4 feet.

All the above is concerned with a natural weed growth. It does not concern waters which have become infested with unnatural weed growth, nor where pollution has played a part in causing weed growth to run wild.

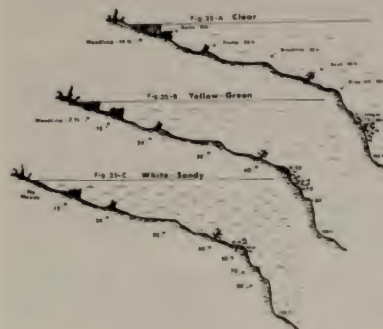
In conclusion, you can view the color of water and come up with a fairly accurate answer as to the amount of weeds normally expected in a given lake. While at the same time, you can turn this around, and by noting the weed growth and relating it to fish movements, water color and bottom conditions, you can evaluate reasonably well fishing possibilities for any water. If weed conditions are excessive - good fishing will be tough. If the weed condition is a small

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one - good fishing should be easy.

By now you should begin to understand the importance of water color and how it could become THE important factor in the interpretation of fishing waters.

MIGRATION vs. WATER COLOR



The three Figures above are cross sections (side view) of a structure. They are identical with the exception of water color. Figure 35-A is clear water, Figure 35-B is a darker yellow-green water, and Figure 35-C is white-sandy water.

Note the weedline. In the clear water the weeds extend out to 14 feet. In the darker yellow-green they go to 7 feet, and — no weeds at all in the white-sandy water color.

Let's put a group of fish on each structure. All groups have the same "breaks", weather conditions and available depths. The only difference is water color. Let's see how this one difference will affect these fish.

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I will start the movements of these fish by putting them in a bad weather situation, and then improve on it. Be sure to remember that trouble begins in interpretation and presentation below the 15 foot depth. It gets progressively harder as you go deeper.

In Figure 35-A, clear water with a bad weather condition, I place the school of fish at the 70 to 80 foot level. Figure 35-B — 60 to 70 feet, and Figure 35-C at 50 feet.

Now let's improve the weather, — say the second day after a cold front for starters. The fish in Figure 35-A move up between the 70 foot ledge and the drop-off. In Figure 35-B the fish have moved up to the drop-off, and in Figure 35-C they have moved to the bush at 40 feet.

The third day, following the front, conditions still improve. Fish in the clear water (Figure 35-A) have moved to the 50 foot drop-off. Those in the yellow-green water (Figure 35-B) are now up to the bush, and those in the white-sandy (Figure 35-C) are at the 30 foot breakline.

At this stage of the game, the fish are just about back to the area, or depth, of their deep water sanctuary. The fish in the clear water may settle down somewhere between the 50 foot drop-off and the bush. Those in the yellow-green may settle down between the 40-foot bush and the breakline. The school in the white-sandy are at the 30 foot breakline. This represents a pretty good difference in depth between the clear and the white-sandy, as far as the sanctuary is concerned.

On the fourth day, the migration in the clear water, brings the fish up to the 40 foot bush. The yellow-green school up to the 30 foot breakline, and the white-sandy bunch up to the stump, at 24 feet, before returning to the sanctuary.

The fifth day things improve even further. During the movement period, the clear water fish may move up as far as the 30 foot breakline, with a few going shallower. Those in Figure 35-B move up to the 24 foot stump area, with a few going all the way to the 15 foot rockpile. In the white-sandy the school moves in mass to the rock pile at 15 feet, with the yearlings, and a few of the larger fish, moving shallower with some scattering in the shallows.

The sixth day, the fish in the clear water may move in mass beyond the 30 foot breakline, some may stop at the 24 foot stump, but many may venture as far as the rocks and the weedline. In the yellow-green they have migrated to the rock pile, with quite a few moving to the 7 foot weedline, and the yearlings may have scattered along, or back in the

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weeds at this point. The group in the white-sandy has moved beyond the rock pile, with many fish scattering into the shallows.

The sixth day movement as depicted for clear water would take excellent weather conditions for fish to move this shallow. This migration should be considered the exception rather than normal. Movements as indicated, can be expected in yellow-green or white-sandy waters.

Another important thing you should not forget, is the TIME element. A 'rule of thumb' would be: **the clearer the water, the less time of migration.**

To further implant WEATHER and WATER firmly in your mind, let's set up a fishing trip for you. You have a trip planned for the coming weekend. On Thursday or Friday a cold front comes through. What should you do?

First, decide where you go. In most cases you have a choice of water. You should pick water where you KNOW the structures best — where located and how to fish them. Your selection shouldn't have any restrictions on fishing procedures, and should have the least amount of weekend traffic you can find.

Next, you should pick out the species of fish to go after. If your trip falls right after the front, and you have a choice of species, then pick the northern or the walleye — not bass. Remember I told you northerns and walleyes may be the first to show after a front.

Water color now becomes important. Is the lake dirty or dingy, or is it clear? If there's a choice, pick the dirty one. Next, if you have a choice pick a lake that isn't too deep. If it's a man-made reservoir, plan to fish the upper reaches. The upper reaches limit the depth the fish can go, while at the same time it should contain the darker water.

Some thought should be given to the quantity of fish in the lake. Does it have all age groups? Does it contain a large population of fish, and does it have a lot of two and three year old fish (yearlings, stragglers).

Another point to think about is wind. Is the lake wide open, where there's very little protection? Wind, following a cold front can be expected, and often it's quite strong. If your best lake or structures can't be fished, due to wind or waves, you are better off in a lake you know little about, and where there are less fish.

After considering the above physical conditions, you should give some thought to the mechanics of catching fish. How are you going to fish this particular water? You know

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the fish will be deep and movement will be limited. If they do move you will have to be ready because they will be short movements. Your casting and trolling will have to be "right on the money" to produce fish. Which procedure would be best?

During this weather condition, speed and depth control will have to be examined more carefully. Take along a good supply of gas because you'll do a lot of running around. All your "hot spots" will have to be checked periodically, and a lot of time will be spent trolling for stragglers. And, plan to spend a long day if you want to catch fish.

If all the conditions are tough — go fishing anyway. Fishing success is relative. A successful trip, following a cold front, is more satisfying than a trip when everything is right and you fill the boat. Nothing makes YOU a better fisherman than experience. It's the tough situations that teach you — not the easy ones. You can become a good fisherman if you want to be one. And the only way to accomplish this is through effort and a desire to LEARN.

1. Reduce all observations down to the amount of _____ penetrating the water.
2. _____ can be filtered out better by dark or dingy water than it can by clear water.
3. _____ water means DEEP fish. _____ water means easier fishing.
4. Plan your fishing trips according to _____ and _____ conditions.



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CONTROLS

Fishermen go fishing for one reason—to catch fish. To ease their disappointment of an empty stringer, many will make the comment that they didn't catch any fish, but had a wonderful trip and such a nice day to be outdoors. Who do they think they're kidding? They're lying in their teeth.

Many go fishing and just "hope" the fish will be biting — or just "hope" to have some luck. This thinking is for the birds. And if these are the only controls they expect to use in their fishing they are due for many more, wonderful fishless days.

If YOU depend on luck — the odds aren't very good. And if you wait until you hear the fish are biting, you are most likely greeted at the dock by, "you should have been here last week!"

You cannot control weather, water conditions, nor the appetites of fish. You can, however, exercise "Controls" in your fishing that will assure you more constant catches, more limit catches, and more lunker fish — regardless what conditions might be.

Controls could include things like seines, gigs, nets, shocking devices, dynamite, poison, draining, etc. But in most instances these controls are outlawed. You could include expertise in the handling of a casting or trolling rod if you wish. And possibly, if odor worked, it could be included, but these are not the controls I have in mind. **CONTROLS are the things you must do, or the things you must CONTROL to go about your fishing in an orderly and precise manner — to arrive at the fish, and then put him on the stringer.**

While you might think this would cover a lot of different headings, it can be boiled down to CONTROL of DEPTH, SPEED, SIZE, COLOR and ACTION. When these five controls are thoroughly understood and utilized, fishing will offer a new challenge and increased stringers.

ACTION CONTROL

Most manufacturers have built ACTION into their lures — and very little can be done to change this. SPOONPLUGS® were designed with the knowledge that it's impossible to state that any given action is best for ALL occasions. Size, speed and depth the lure is running has to be considered. I built each size so, that when the lure passed a fish at the correct speed he would strike.

You as a fisherman should not consider lure ACTION as a distinct and separate control. Instead you should consider it more as adjunct to speed control. If you consider it as a

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distinct and separate control, then you're putting faith in some particular wiggle in the lure. This is something which you have no control over.

ACTION should be viewed as an AID — not a CONTROLLING factor for catching fish. Every available action could be used, but if it wasn't used at the right depth, or at the right speed, it would put no fish on the stringer.

ACTION should also be considered in relation to temperature. Just as speed versus temperature is related, so is ACTION versus temperature. This means, the slower, lazier action is used at low temperature and a fast, vigorous action is used at higher temperatures.

The desired ACTION when working shallow and when working deep vary. An increase in depth would call for a broader slower action, where a fast tighter wiggle would be indicated when working shallow (speed vs. depth vs. temperature vs. visibility).

In looking at lure ACTION more as a degree of SPEED rather than lure wiggle, the lure will be seen in a more comprehensive manner. Does it have some action and some speed control at the same time? Or, does it limit itself to one particular speed? When viewed in this perspective, we add dimension, not only to the control, but to the whole of fishing. And, you as a fisherman, are not putting all of your faith or hope in just a wiggle.

To a fisherman exposed to SPOONPLUGGING for the first time it seems strange and confusing. Much is said about speed control, but very little is said about action. In talking to a SPOONPLUGGER, he hears about the importance of speed, but in talking to the average fisherman he hears all ACTION. Many do not understand what is meant by Speed control, nor do they understand where Action fits into the picture; nor do they completely understand the relationship between the two.

ACTION and SPEED control are practically one and the same. There would be no action without speed. For example — take a surface lure. How much action would you have if you don't have some degree of speed? To further view the relationship between Action and Speed, let's take a look at two lures moving through the water from "here to there." The first lure is moving so many feet per second, it arrives at its destination quickly, and would be observed as moving at a fast rate of SPEED. The second lure is moving through the water with a vigorous, wiggling, vibrating and wobbling movement, but is getting from "here to there" at a slow pace. The second lure gives the illusion of a fast moving lure

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(speed), but it is really only Action. The first lure is moving with speed — and herein lies the difference, and the close relationship, between SPEED and ACTION.

The secret to controlling these two ingredients is to place emphasis on lure movement through the water in feet per second (speed). **ANY ACTION THAT MAY BE INVOLVED SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED.** There is no possible way for you to know how to control ACTION, except through SPEED control. You might say, "yeah, but I have a tackle box full of different actions."

No doubt you have. But you just try to control them effectively, or successfully, on any given fishing trip. **Forget action, only consider how fast you move the lure.**

COLOR CONTROL

One of the first questions most often asked is, "What color do you recommend?"

Too much emphasis is put on color. If fishermen had a color that would prove to be the most delectable morsel a fish could desire, and he fished it at ten feet and fish were at twenty-five feet, the fish would never know that delicious tidbit was available.

COLOR should be viewed in the proper perspective. It can be controlled by a simple hand rule. **If conditions are BRIGHT — such as a bright day, clear water — use BRIGHT lures, such as silver, white-red, etc. If conditions are DARK — such as a cloudy day or dingy water — go to DARKER lures, such as copper, orange-black, etc.** Cold, brass, and yellow colors should be considered more or less neutral and to work under either condition.

This hand rule will locate fish as far as color is concerned and if there is, or should be, a color preference, it can be determined only after the fish have been located. With this rule in mind, you can never go wrong in having more than one color in your tackle box.

At times fish do appear to have a color preference, and you should stick to this color, but this condition would be the exception rather than the rule. Some waters may appear to have a color preference. You would find this out if you fish the water often, and you should be guided by this color.

The LIGHT condition that exists will govern any color preference. If one should appear it will normally fit the hand rule. You should follow the rule, and any color preference would be welcomed, but by no means go through the colors seeking one that a fish might hit with no regards to more

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important controls, such as depth and speed — color isn't that important.

SIZE CONTROL

Many fishermen stick to one size or weight of lure. They will never take it off regardless of the depth they might be working. Lure SIZE should be considered as a control.

Never look at size in relationship to the fish you expect to catch. Just because you're not fishing for whales doesn't mean you should not use large lures. Always remember that fish, such as bass, will try to eat anything their own size — maybe even larger. You can catch small fish on large lures and large fish on small lures. Many times you will catch fish smaller than your lure.

Lure SIZE is important from the standpoint of getting better depth control. In most situations it is practically impossible to work effectively deep water with a small lure, unless weights, leaded lines, etc., are used, and the use of these are not without problems. It would also be difficult to take a large, deep-running lure and work the shallows.

If there is any size preference, it would be according to depth; that is, the deeper the fish the larger the lure. The natural food of fish is stocked this way, and certainly fish can see the lures better if fished in this manner.

A size preference may exist under certain circumstances and with some species. But, as stated earlier, it will normally be according to depth. It's wise at times to check the deeper water with different sizes where presentation of the lure is not too difficult. Such as, when casting a jump type lure (jig, worm, etc.) in very cold water. The smaller sizes may seem to work better at times, but as the water warms, and the fish's metabolism speeds up, it may be found the larger lures will be more effective. For some species, a small swimming lure worked deep seems to be preferred at certain times. In this instance a small lure could be pulled down by attaching a trailer to a large, deep running lure.

At all times, use weights and SIZES which allow you to present lures correctly for the conditions and what you're trying to accomplish at that particular time. This will put SIZE in its proper perspective.

SPEED CONTROL

The definition of speed is velocity — an object moving at so many miles per hour, or per foot, or per second. When we speak of SPEED control in fishing, many immediately think of a lure moving at a FAST rate through the water. If

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you work a lure in such a way as to let it remain still for a moment, without any movement, then the speed is zero. Thus speed can vary from zero to very, very slow, up to very, very fast, with variances in between.

The average fisherman has never been concerned with just how fast his lure was moving through the water. He has been plagued through the years with misinformation about how slow a lure must be worked, and any thought of using a fast speed was a "no-no." The word SPEED was used to impress upon you the importance of controlling the velocity with which your lure moves through the water. If you are like most fishermen you fish too slow under most conditions, and particularly when working in shallow water. In our efforts to stress the importance of the speed, some have gotten the mistaken idea they should go racing helter-skelter over the lake. Speed is important, BUT in the proper areas and under certain conditions.

What are the areas and conditions affecting speed? Weather and water TEMPERATURE are the primary conditions that determine speed. As weather and water temperatures rise, so does speed; as weather and water temperatures decrease, so does speed.

Shallow water and deep water work differ in speed needs. Faster and more varied speeds are used when working the shallows than when working the migration routes or the bottom sanctuary. When working bottom in deep water, speed is reduced to a minimum. The controlling factor here is the walking or bumping of the lure on the sanctuary or migration route. Here the speed should be just enough to produce a steady walk or bump. The deeper you fish, and the colder the water, the slower the walk or bump required. The correct speed can only be determined at the time you are fishing.

Always start with sufficient speed to give the lure some action, then increase at intervals. Keep in mind that maximum speed will be needed during your summer fishing, but decrease it as weather and water cools until you reach the minimum during the colder parts of the season (late fall, winter, early spring). Only by varying speed can the most productive one be found. If you use the same speed in August as you used in April, then your chances for success are greatly decreased. That April speed needs more "zip" in it come August.

You can throw all action, color and size, found in your tackle box and use it all along a particular shoreline, BUT if you haven't considered speed, you haven't fished the area

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thoroughly or completely

DEPTH CONTROL

As stated earlier, most fishermen do not realize, or take into consideration, that fish change their depth. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that you cannot catch fish unless you are fishing where they are. DEPTH CONTROL should be looked upon as THE MOST IMPORTANT phase of fishing. And it should be done as effectively as possible.

To put DEPTH CONTROL in its simplest form, I could say, "You should fish the deep water, the shallow water, and the water in-between, for the purpose of getting a lure to the fish." This is essentially true, but to be able to do this involves more than just using different lures that run at different depths. You must approach DEPTH CONTROL in a much broader sense than just placing lures shallow and deep.

WHERE and HOW to test the water to arrive at the fish (depth) must be based on knowledge in terms of:

- Different Species
- Different Seasons
- Different Water Conditions
- Different Weather Conditions
- Different Lakes
- Different Structures
- Different Bottom Conditions
- Different Time Periods

This list could be made longer, but these few show the broad area covered by DEPTH CONTROL, and the important part it plays in consistent, and successful fishing. All of the controls previously studied would be of little value without a thorough understanding of this subject.

All future parts of your studies and efforts should be directed toward further knowledge of this control — the WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW.

BASIC CONTROLS

The basic controls — DEPTH, SPEED, SIZE, COLOR and ACTION were in the beginning, reduced to a minimum number. However, if you are to have a chance of finding the right combination of these controls, they will have to be reduced even further. This will give you a more workable combination. It is evident that the number of possible combinations that you could run into on any fishing trip would be staggering. Therefore, by eliminating them even further you will be able to fish in a more systematic fashion.

You should have noted that all of these controls are

basic and fundamental, and that all will certainly affect your success to some degree. Some will become routine while others will require a greater effort on your part. While none of the basic controls can be **eliminated**, use this word as a means of reducing the list still further.

The first one we will eliminate is ACTION.

We know already that action alone will not put fish on the stringer. It must be used with speed, or we lose it and have nothing. It must be used with depth, or what good would it be? Fish can't be enticed by a wiggle unless they can see it. A wiggle is an AID not a control. Thus, **ACTION CONTROL WOULD BE ACHIEVED BY SPEED CONTROL.**

The next to go is COLOR.

Testing to see if one color is preferable to another presents no great problem. But, whatever color is used, it must be at the depth where fish can see it. A fish can't "eat" any color unless he knows it's available. Color may not be of interest if it's just lying there with no movement, but a fish could become interested if he saw it escaping (speed). Color placed in this light becomes another AID, rather than a control.

The hand rule for color (bright conditions, bright lures; dark conditions, dark lures) is sufficient as far as color is concerned. You are concerned with color only in conjunction with light conditions that exist at the time. This rule certainly eliminates this control as a worry or concern. If you have a favorite color — USE IT.

The third control we will eliminate is SIZE.

If I were to establish a rule for size I would say, "Small lures in the shallows, and as the depth increases, lure size increases." You can readily understand how difficult control would be if the reverse were true, if smaller fish in the shallows went only for large lures, and the larger, deeper fish went only for small lures, you'd be in deep trouble.

Our concern, or control of size, can be handled without much difficulty. Different sizes are available and you merely take time to test them out by using sizes and weights that enable you to work the various depths at different speeds. You could have a tackle box full of sizes and still draw a blank if you didn't put them at the right depth or move them at the correct speed. Here again, this Control becomes more of an AID, rather than a major control.

Out of the five CONTROLS originally listed, three have been eliminated or reclassified as AIDs. You now come to the two remaining controls — DEPTH and SPEED. These are

the MAIN CONTROLS.

You can now proceed on a mechanical basis, as you are in a position to establish procedures that will give you control of ALL the factors involved. You no longer have to worry about finding the right combination of five (5) controls, but only two (2). These two controls (depth and speed) **MUST BE CONTROLLED AT THE SAME TIME.** You must not sacrifice one for the other.

You have a lot of study and effort to do on these two main controls as they pertain to: WHAT depth and speed, WHERE depth and speed, WHEN depth and speed, WHY depth and speed, and HOW depth and speed. This knowledge is the "toughy" — not the selection of lures, that might have the right size, color or action.

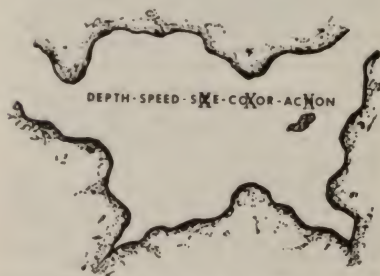


FIGURE 36

Figure 36 shows the controls left that will enable you to catch fish out of this lake. All other factors, such as — depth meters, lures, rods, lines, boats, motors, casting and trolling ability, etc. — are only AIDs to help you accomplish this.

HAND RULES FOR CONTROLS

ACTION: Treat as speed.

COLORS: Light - light; Dark - dark; Neutral.

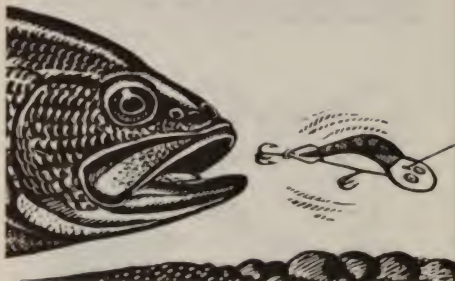
SIZE: As per depth. Have different weights and sizes.

SPEED: As per temperature and depth. Check it out.

DEPTH: Work all correctly at the proper place and time.

One final thought. If YOU want to become a good fisherman. And if YOU want to feel at home on any water, fishing for any species, then heed this: **ALL fishing SUCCESSES and ALL fishing FAILURES, MUST be answered in terms of DEPTH and SPEED control. NEVER try to answer a fishing question in terms of AIDs — size, color, action, casting, trolling, fishing equipment, intelligence of the fish, weather, water conditions, traffic, odor or pollution. NO THING, but DEPTH and SPEED. You gotta breathe it, smell it, eat it and live it.**





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TOOLS

When discussing fishing gear (rods, reels, lures, baits, boats, motors, etc.), I prefer to talk about them as being **TOOLS**. Your whole purpose in purchasing fishing gear should be aimed at the control of **DEPTH** and **SPEED**. If your selection does not allow you to control these two things, in all situations, then your purpose in buying it was for a reason other than catching fish.

What you choose to use, or how you go about using it, is your business. But if you wish to accomplish the desired results, and to assure your future growth in fishing knowledge, fishing skills and fishing success — regardless of existing conditions — your selection of fishing gear **MUST** enable you to secure **DEPTH** and **SPEED** control.

If your procedures and tools, used in the presentation, gives you only 50 percent of the depth or speed required, then don't expect more than 50 percent success.

The items will include the following:

- | | |
|----------|-----------------|
| 1- Rods | 6- Markers |
| 2- Reels | 7- Anchors |
| 3- Lines | 8- Net |
| 4- Boat | 9- Lures |
| 5- Motor | 10- Depth Meter |

In considering the **TOOLS** you will use in your fishing, I am not going to be concerned with those needed for the "extra light line" techniques, fly rods, deep sea fishing, pan fishing, and certain types of stream fishing. Neither am I going to consider the tools in the light of tournament, or "bulls-eye" casting, or other areas which I could mention. I do not have time, space, or desire, to consider the pro's and con's of equipment. I am only interested in items I know will do the job, that is, control the things necessary to give me catches and knowledge. I am not saying other type equipment will not catch fish. After all, you will be the final judge anyway.

Our selection and consideration will be tackle items that can be used to catch the large (and small) freshwater game fish such as bass, walleye, great northern, muskie, trout, white bass, stripers and so on. This tackle will allow fishing in the more shallow sections of saltwater such as sloughs, bays, tidal rivers, etc., for fish such as snook, blue fish, stripers (rock fish), trout, rock bass, corvina, salmon, etc. You may personally prefer fishing for a particular fish and using a certain type of equipment, but regardless of what

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you fish for, or what you fish with, you are still faced with the facts of **Controls**, and whatever you use must be directed toward them.

RODS

Many fishermen have the idea they can cast and troll with the same rod. This they cannot do. In order to have control, a separate rod is needed for each.

Casting

I cannot possibly go into the many styles and types of casting rods that are available. We will concern ourselves only with the **main characteristics desired** which will allow you to handle all situations adequately, as the future studies will point out.

The first considerations in selecting a rod should be length, degree of stiffness or limberness, and durability.

A good all-around casting rod is one that is 5½ to 6 feet in length. The action of the rod should be **heavy**, not like a buggy whip. It must be strong enough to handle all phases of fishing without tearing up. A rod with sufficient length, and strong enough to handle the many uses it will be called upon to do, will allow you, not only control in fishing, but of the fish as well.

Trolling Rod

The best description of a trolling rod would be — not too long, not too limber, tough, rugged.

A length of 4½ feet is good. While a longer rod can be used, great care must be made in getting the proper stiffness in proportion to the added length.

The action should be **STIFF**. It would be better to troll with a broom handle than 'drag' a lure through the water with a spinning rod, or light casting rod. The word 'drag' expresses the action very well, for you can't possibly **TROLL** with such a rod. There is a world of difference between dragging a lure and **TROLLING** a lure. **It takes far more skill to be a good troller than it does to be a good caster.**

The correct characteristics are more often found in a solid type rod shaft than in a hollow type. When selecting a hollow type shaft, be careful that the correct stiffness and shortness is there. In some instances an old casting rod can be adapted for trolling by cutting the rod off

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and remounting the tip guide.

If the trolling rod is too long or too short, too limber or too weak, you will not be able to control your fishing in the way that the many situations and conditions require. The "feel" is lost, the knowledge is lost, lures are lost, time is lost, and fish are lost.

REELS

Casting

An open faced, level winding reel is the best choice. This reel will allow you to handle all situations — hangs, rough bottoms, proper handling of fish, and all lure sizes and weights.

The reel should be kept fairly full of line so as to have speed control; with a little 'dab' of line, you could crank yourself to death moving your lures or working a fish. Too little line will also make good casting next to impossible. A reel with a high retrieve ratio is desirable over one of low.

While it's wrong to have too little line on your reel, it is possible at times to have too much. With some reels casting can be more difficult if too much line is used. If there is problems with backlashes, too much line could be the cause. If so, remove short sections at a time until you find the amount that performs best for you.

If you are still bothered with accuracy, distance, or 'birds nests' — take a look at your casting rod, you may need to **stiffen it up**. In most cases this is the primary cause of any difficulties in using a level winding casting reel.

If a good model level winding casting reel is used (such as the Ambassador 5000 series) proper use can be mastered in a very short period of time — in your backyard. Casting this type of reel requires an easy smooth movement of the arm and rod. Movement is more at the elbow than at the wrist. There is no 'snap' cast, such as with the spinning type reels.

Trolling

This should be a standard service reel — a type similar to the light saltwater reel. It should have:

- (a) level wind
- (b) star drag, which has the anti-reverse feature
- (c) When the lever is thrown disengaging the anti-

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reverse (free spool), such as in letting out line, **be sure the handles do not disengage from the spool.** The Spoonplugger reel has this feature.

The reel spool should be fairly well filled with line, and normally 100 yards is a sufficient amount for fishing needs, but on many reels this amount does not fill the spool to the proper capacity. In this instance, an arbor or 'backing' should be used.

LINES

Here again, you are faced with the situation where one item will not prove satisfactory for complete control in both casting and trolling.

Basically the monofilament lines are best. They do not get wet, they slice through the water, and they come in sufficient strengths for most any type of fishing. If a fisherman mainly fishes topwater, or in instances where a sinking line is not desired, then the braided type line may be better. Since we are not concerned with specific situations, we will discuss monofilaments.

Casting

When using a monofilament line on a level winding reel, it is best that the line not be too soft, or limber. The soft lines were developed primarily for spinning reels, and some are very difficult to cast on a level winding reel. Use lines that have more stiffness rather than limpness and elasticity. Normally the cheaper $\frac{1}{4}$ lb spools are better than the more expensive kind.

For better control and with a minimum loss of lures a test of around 15 lbs. is recommended. A heavier test, under some fishing conditions, may be called for. Anytime the test is dropped below 12 lbs. you could start running into troubles, and these troubles are unnecessary. Loss of control, lures, and fish is uncalled for.

Trolling Line

You usually have very little choice in choosing a good monofilament trolling line. In most instances you have to settle for a line that is too soft and too stretchy. Trying to troll with it is like trying to troll with a rubber band. Communication with the lure is lost and the interpretation needed is difficult to get. You are faced with a loss of lures, as well as losing the 'feel' of what is going on under the surface. Soft, stretchy lines produce an excess bow in the line, reducing its efficiency still

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further. To perform as required, a good trolling line should be **hard** and **stiff** with the **stretch removed**.

To have complete control while trolling, you should know at all times approximately how much line you are running, and should be able to return to the same length once the lure is brought in. This calls for the line to be **metered** in some fashion.

Lines from 12 lb. test up to 25 lb. test would, in most instances, have sufficient strength to cover most any situation that would occur.

As stated, a proper trolling line is most difficult to find, and it was for this reason the No-Bo Trolling Line was produced by Buck's Baits. This line comes in different tests and diameters, it has the stiffness, stretch removed, and is metered every 30 feet with color markings.

Trolling Lines - Weighted

As stated, fishermen get into trouble after reaching depths of 15-20 feet. With the lures available, he cannot reach effectively below this depth on a normal troll with a monofilament line. In order to go beyond this depth, he must start getting outside assistance. This can be done by adding weights to help pull the lures deeper, or he can go to a leaded or wire line. In most instances, he has to sacrifice something — and in this case, it is control. Most of these items used to get additional depth are meant to work, and should only be used in special instances. But I wouldn't be caught fishing without an extra trolling reel filled with wire line.

It should also be pointed out that a combination of the monofilament line and the weighted, or wire line, can be used. A section of weighted line 10-20 yds. long added to the front of the monofilament will give additional depth with fair control.

LINE DIAMETER

The diameter of the line plays a part in just how much depth control can be obtained with any particular style lure. The smaller the diameter the greater the depth. If we were to pick one as being the best all-around one, it would be one of 15 to 17 pound test. This line gives good strength, feel and depth. After experience is gained, and if the waters do not contain too many weeds, brush or hangs, then you can drop the diameter. One point to remember though, the

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larger diameters give more 'feel' and strength, but with a loss in depth, and the smaller diameters give additional depth, but with a loss in strength and 'feel' (control).

Many fishermen view line diameter and test in regards to the fish 'seeing' the line. They may often say, 'I couldn't buy a strike until I switched to 4 pound line.' They were answering a fishing failure or a fishing success in terms of line diameter, visibility etc. Personally, I want the fish to see my line. I want him to know I am around, or my lure is around. If the line will get his attention, then hooray for it.

The above fishermen were giving credit for success to light line, and the ability of the fish to see or not to see it? What they should have known was that with the speed they were using, or the **speed necessary** at the time, a small diameter line was required to **maintain depth control**. You gotta keep in mind, these two controls must be maintained **AT THE SAME TIME**.

YOU MUST NOT ANSWER A FISHING QUESTION BY ANYTHING EXCEPT DEPTH AND SPEED CONTROL

Earlier I stated that a good all-around line would be one of 15 pound test. This gives good strength, good handling of most situations good for most lure weights, sizes, etc. BUT, suppose I wanted to use a 1/16 ounce jig. I am working the bottom at a fair depth, and I find I can't get good speed and depth control on this small jig by using my 15 pound line. The resistance between the water and the large diameter line completely kills my efforts to work the jig properly. I find the weight is not sufficient to sink the line properly, and not only do I lose speed control, I lose depth control as well. **I find I am fishing the line instead of the lure.** This becomes more acute if the jig has a trailer. I find that if I reduce the line diameter, say — to 4 pounds, then **I can work the lure.** This smaller diameter does not produce friction in the water great enough to affect my depth and speed control on such a small, light jig.

Maybe I could get pretty good depth and speed control on a $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce jig, with slightly bigger diameter line, but I might find in order to get the **DESIRED** control, with the 15 pound test, I would probably have to move up to a $\frac{3}{8}$ ounce or a $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce jig.

The same applies when working a fly, nymph, etc. If my line diameter was too great, I would not get depth or speed control that may be necessary at any particular time. If I reduce this diameter to a hair, thin line, I can make the fly perform in any way I wish. I can float it naturally, etc.

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This I could not do with a heavy, dragging line.

Some time you may be fishing crappie with live bait. You find the fish are taking a lively, swimming minnow. If the minnow is dead, you find they ignore it. You may find in this situation that the action is best with smaller diameter line. One which would not hinder the Speed of the minnow.

At other times, when fishing crappie, you find it doesn't matter whether the minnow is alive or dead, in fact, the dead minnow appears best. A hunk of cut bait (cut from the side of a crappie) works better at times. If you tested further you might find that with this speed control you could hang the bait on an anchor rope and it wouldn't make any difference.

Suppose you are working a deep bar for walleyes, you are using a sliding sinker rig with live bait such as a night-crawler, minnow, etc. You may be drifting, rowing, or back trolling to move the bait on bottom. The movement of the boat and the **line** drag is pulling the bait up, and the sinker is holding it down. You should see, if much speed is used, the bait will leave bottom — loss of depth control. You should see at once that the line diameter may be the cause.

It might be well to bring in here that many fishermen load down their lines and lures with a big snap swivel. Some will use a 100 lb. test snap swivel and a 4 lb. test line — which makes no sense whatsoever. Others will use a snap swivel bigger than the lure, killing any performance the lure might have. For most fishing, casting and trolling — a No. 2 snap is sufficient. The snap tied directly to the line will give a flexible joint between the lure and the line, and will facilitate the changing of lures.

BOATS AND MOTORS

These are items on which the final decision will be made by you. However, there are a few thoughts which should be considered in making the selection. First we state — not too big, not too little.

In choosing a boat and motor for fishing in most waters, such as lakes, reservoirs, streams and coastal waters, the main mistake made by fishermen is that they do not take into consideration that a boat and motor can be too big for obtaining maximum control in all areas of fishing. Since most will not use a boat too small and unsafe, I won't be as concerned that they can be too small. If the size of the boat and motor limits speed and depth control, then the fisherman is adding additional problems to his chances of success. My obligation is to point out what will allow control with the

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least problems and with as much ease as possible. The final decision, though, is yours — not mine.

Boats:

A 14 to 15 foot fishing-type boat is by far the most preferable type. A "John" boat is about as good as you can get.

If you try to control all phases of fishing in a 'run-about' type of boat, you are limiting your fishing in many ways. You are unable to control speeds properly. You may get some lures in position *part* of the time. And when trolling, most of the time you will be 'dragging' a lure in the water rather than trolling it. In casting, you may get your boat located in the correct position on some structures for doing deep water work, provided of course, the wind isn't blowing.

Most 'run-about' boats have remote steering (steering wheel) and this really compounds the problems. Remote steering is a real chore to fish, it is very tiring and produces sloppy fishing in all phases. Outside of some deep water work, about all that the average fisherman should expect to do with any degree of skill, or control, for success, is to soak live bait or 'drift fish' structure. The fishing problems created by remote steering can be partially offset by using an extra motor for maneuverability, etc.

Remote steering can create most of the same problems on a **fishing-type boat**, if provisions are not made to have an extra motor or something for maneuverability and control.

Motors:

These same problems that I have mentioned, under boats, begin to develop when the motor used gets above 10 H.P. The range of horse power that is best is from 5 to 10 H.P. This does not mean that a good fisherman cannot use a larger horse power and do a good job, but I say he would do a better job with a motor in the 5 to 10 H.P. range.

Experience has shown that as the horse power increases above 10 H.P. there begins to be a decrease in fishing success. This decrease is in proportion to the increase in horse power. A simple exploration — the fisherman does not work thoroughly enough with the larger horse

power, nor can he 'control' all phases as well.

I might point out too, that in using big boats and big motors fishing costs skyrocket. Loss of lures alone can amount to a tidy sum. Not only that, but you may find yourself with an empty tackle box at a critical time.

Modern "Bass Boats" — are solid comfort. But do not think for one moment they will improve your fishing success or knowledge. They will, in fact, **in the long run**, reduce your chances for success. The day you purchase one, is the day you place a limit on your knowledge, and just how good a fisherman you can become.

MARKERS:

I can't stress too much the importance of your using markers in fishing. Not only do they serve as guide posts, but with the proper use of markers, you can learn more easily all phases of lure presentation and better 'learn' your waters.

Some fishermen try to use a depth meter in place of markers. To a certain degree, they point out the same things, but of the two, markers take over after the depth meter has done all it can do, which in most instances is only an aid in seeing where to place the markers. If markers are not thrown, you learn very little from the use of your depth meter.

Once markers are thrown, you can concentrate on presentation of lures, learn mapping, and interpreting. **The depth meter will not do any of these.**

The line attached to the float can vary in length, but a good hand rule to follow is to have approximately fifteen feet of line on most of them, but have at least one with about thirty-five feet of line. The shorter lengths to be used on structures and the longer length to mark the channel, or hole.

Use enough weight on the line so it will spin off the float, but don't use too much or it will sink the float. A flat, rectangular piece of styrofoam is ideal. The weight will spin the line off, until the weight hits bottom, then the surplus line will remain wrapped around the float. Parts from an old styrofoam cooler can be used. An empty, plastic, oil container will also make a good marker.

Before removing markers, be sure you remember to secure 'sight bearings' on the shore for future reference. Remember too, that as far as sight bearings are concerned, they should be used continually on all trolling passes and casting positions.

ANCHOR:

Every fisherman should carry at least one anchor, and two when possible. Proper presentation of lures in casting cannot be accomplished in all cases without an anchor.

At least one anchor should be of the 'wind' type. This is, an anchor that does not hold the boat by weight, but does so by grabbing the bottom. Most fishermen prefer the wind type, as it is light, easy to retrieve, and does not pull too much water and dirt into the boat.

The amount of line to put on an anchor will vary, but a **minimum** of thirty feet should be used to give not only some depth control, but to allow proper positioning of the boat in the wind. The higher the wind, the longer the length of rope used.

NET:

A net can be an important item in fishing. The one that got away doesn't count for much.

Most fishermen tend to use too small a net. When fishing in a boat, the minimum net size should be at least sixteen inches in diameter with a handle length of 2 to 3 feet. A somewhat larger net would be more preferable.

LURES:

I suppose lures are given more credit for fishing success than any other thing. All you have to do is listen or watch the buying habits of the fishermen.

If you have in mind the catching of different species of fish consistently, in most weather and water conditions, you should have three basic lure types to control both depth and speed.

- 1 - Topwater or shallow working.
- 2 - Free running - bottom bumping.
- 3 - Jump type.

Lure designs in these basic lures are many and widely varied — thousands of models are available. Anyone would be hard pressed to say which is better as most are basically the same. The only difference is a slight change in shape or color. Most lures are made to sell the fisherman—not the fish.

Weedless or snagless lures would be any type of lure which has some type of hook guard or weed guard, as it is more commonly called. The idea of the weedless angle is so you can work them in areas containing grass, weeds, brush, etc.

1 - Topwater or Shallow Working:

Normally, when thinking of a topwater lure, you think

in terms of a floating lure with no lip or other device to pull it under the water. Some are pointed — the tail section under water, with the head sticking out. These are normally used by ducking the head down in a diving action. Another version of this type are the ones with a cupped head, used to produce a popping noise.

Some are built to lie flat on the surface and give a darting motion. There are still others used with a steady retrieve across the top of the water, producing a gurgling racket.

The different type Topwater lures are built to represent some type of food for the fish. But in reality, they only represent a **SPEED** control. Most anything, with a hook attached, would serve the same purpose, provided it can be used to properly check speeds.

Shallow working lures are just what the name implies. They run near the surface or down a foot or so when retrieved. Their numbers are legion. You could shut your eyes, grab at a display, and come up with a jillion.

The first category (topwater, shallow working) are used for obvious reasons. In most waters, however, this depth control (or water) neither produces consistently, nor provides limits of lunker fish. Lures for this particular area in most waters, should be called "Five Percent Lures". They should be looked upon merely as AIDS to be used when needed. I recall fishing with a friend in Bull Shoals in Missouri a few years ago. It was in the spring, the weather was nice, and the fish were scattered in the shallows. I had already caught my limit with small Spoonplugs, and was well into the process of "culling", before my friend had his limit. He had bought a new lure at the dock, just before we went fishing. He had asked the boat dock operator what lure the fish were hitting. The operator had told him that all the fish were being caught on a, now, well known lure that had recently gotten a big play in a national magazine. The lure was a long slim brightly pointed thing, quite pretty in fact. It was easily cast, and easily retrieved. It floated when not moving, but would run shallow beneath the surface when retrieved. It was easily understood why the only fish caught were being caught on this particular lure. **THIS WAS ALL THAT WAS BEING USED.**

Everytime my friend caught a fish, he would let out a whoop, and go to great pains, to point out what a great

lure it was. Finally I told him I better have me one. Since we were quite a distance from the dock, I told him to wait up a moment while I got me one. I moved to the shoreline, and selected a dead stick, about the right diameter. A couple strokes of the knife and I had the right length. With a few more, I had the ends shaped. I fastened a treble hook to the snap on my casting line, made a hitch around one end, couple twists up around the stick, and tied it to other end.

I never heard a peep out of him about what a great lure he had — after I began to beat his pants off catching fish. I had to agree with him, it was a great lure.

2 - Free Running - Bottom Bumping Lures:

This second group of lures are used in fishing open water at various depths. Here again we have a great variety. However, we start to eliminate many when we add "bottom bumping". Most of the deeper running lures will hit bottom, but they were not built specifically for this purpose. Hardly any of these lures will bump bottom consistently. They will sink or dive to bottom, but when you retrieve, or move them with any degree of speed they will lose their contact with bottom (loss of depth control).

Hardly any lures will be found that will allow the CASTER to work deeper bottoms with any degree of speed, on a walk or bump. Most of this group should be classified as "open water lures", and not bottom bumpers — a major reason Spoonplugs come into existence.

This group (free running - bottom bumping) is The BASIC LURE or TOOL. These tools should be designed and used to set up and determine IF any additional tool or type is needed, and WHERE and HOW it should be used.

If basic tools, such as these, are not continually used to eliminate unproductive water, you as a fisherman will unknowingly swing back to putting your problems, and seeking solutions into inadequate hands — Size, Color and Action. This fact cannot be emphasized too strongly. **To do otherwise will bring about an unbelievable decline in your fishing success.**

3 - Jump Type:

This group of lures includes any lure or bait that has

enough weight to allow it to sink to bottom, and whose action or speed is secured by movement of the rod or reel, or the slow movement of the boat. They are primarily bottom working lures. This group includes the "jigs" — regardless of shape, and with or without feathers, hair or spinners. It includes those that might have weights, in conjunction with a hook and attached trailer, such as worms, minnows, bait, etc. One group of lures, which are often overlooked, are the flat, or slightly cupped, metal spoons (Daredevil). More times than you can shake a stick at, these used as a jump type lure is more effective than a jig or weighted night crawler or plastic worm. It has better control — producing more fish.

The main function of a jump type lure is to get that extra depth and speed control when necessary. Basically, it is used in casting, cold water, marginal weather, cold fronts, limited migrations, and when fish are extra deep and in a non-chasing mood. It is also effective when fish have been partially spooked. **But the main function is for working "known" structures, at extra depths and extra slow speeds.** This lure is only an AID, and should be returned to the tackle box when it has served its purpose. Then you should get back to the basic lures — casting and trolling. By doing this you will have no fear of strange fish or strange waters. You will have your speed and depth control necessary at any particular time or place. Only in this way will you be able to keep your catches consistent. Most of all, it will keep you in full control of your fishing. This can only be said of Group Number 2.

DEPTH vs. SPEED IN LURES.

All the different categories of lures discussed, was for the control of Depth and Speed. You must remember, that both SPEED and DEPTH have to be controlled at the same time. If the lure you use loses Depth, when you try to control Speed, then it is not the correct lure, or you are trying to extend its speed range. You cannot sacrifice or lose one control when checking the other. Let's look at the list of lure types again. This time specifically, in terms of depth and speed control.

In order for the designed action to be maintained, most shallow running lures do not have a wide speed range. However, in most instances, you can check the speed with

them. Since the depth isn't too critical, it wouldn't make much difference whether the lures ran properly or not.

Let's assume you are fishing a "hayfield" or an area that is completely covered with weeds. You are using a weedless spoon, such as a Johnson Silver Minnow or a W-Series Spoonplug. You have a pork chunk attached as a trailer. In the colder weather you would have the lure under the surface, slithering or wiggling through the weeds or grass. At times you would let it sink slowly into pot-holes among the weeds. This method produced fish. After the water warmed up you found you had to make the lure skip, bounce, or skitter across the top of the water for it to produce fish. You are controlling both depth and speed according to water conditions. But — you are controlling both at the same time.

After you pass the shallow zone of water is when your control of depth and speed becomes critical. Let's list lures and baits as to their speed control. We will start with the fast group and move down to the slower ones.

- 1 - Free running - bottom bumping — Faster group
- 2 - Jump lures — Slower, below the free running
- 3 - Live bait — Slower speed, below the jump lures
- 4 - Dead bait — Slowest speed

In the use of these for the control of speed, you must remember the **basic rule** for speed is temperature. In other words, if your depth control is right, then you must control the speed to produce a strike. If both of these are checked thoroughly, and does not produce a strike, then you're fishing where they ain't.

Let's say you are fishing in the coldest weather, in a reservoir. You are fishing in 35 to 40 feet of water, on bottom, in the channel. You are after sauger, and you're fishing straight under the boat with a jig or some other jump type lure. You are concentrating on working your lure slow due to the cold water, but you aren't catching anything. Your next switch is to a live minnow (slower speed) — still nothing. You may find after this, that if you kill the minnow (slower yet) and just let it lie on the bottom you get results.

Although this is another example of control, and relative to the above, it also involves another element — survival instincts of the fish. You find the fish refuse to take either the jig or the live minnow, but when you combine the two, by attaching the jig to the minnow, the fish take. You changed the speed-depth factor, but you also have added the factor of making the minnow **un-natural** by attaching the jig. They

took this combination because you put the jig on the minnow, not because you put the minnow on the jig.

Another example of speed control vs. lure types, could be when you are fishing through the ice. First you put on a jump type lure — no takers. You then switch to live bait — still nothing. What do you do then? You kill the bait, and presto you get some fish. If you do not get any action with this speed control. (I'm assuming you checked depth), go bare yourself another hole — on "structure" this time.

DEPTH METER

A depth meter is an AID — and is an excellent one if you know how to use it. It can defeat more potentially good fishermen than it can help. The reason for this becomes obvious if a little time is spent in watching how they are used, and reading of the miracle concept that some use in advertising their products.

I have seen far too many fishermen running around over the lake "looking" for fish. I have no way of knowing how much time was spent in trying to catch shad or some other forage, or rough fish.

Meters have a way of dominating a fellow's fishing once he gets to using one. If he isn't careful, he will find himself getting glued to the dial, and forgetting all about lure presentation (depth and speed control).

I have seen a troller going down the shoreline with his head buried in a meter, and before he was aware of it, his boat ran completely up on dry land. I have seen two boats approaching each other, with both helmsmen's eyes glued to the dial, and before either was aware the other was around — the boats collided.

I have seen a fisherman making a PERFECT trolling pass around a 'point'. He didn't get a foot either way from a certain contour (depth). He never did know his lure went around the point on dry land. He should take the hooks off his lure, and fasten them to the boat.

Anyone using this instrument too much will not be thorough in working structure, and much of the structure will be missed. For example, say a 10 foot contour is going to be followed, there is a heck of a lot of 10 ft. water in a lake or on structure. A long structure could have many areas with this depth. If you follow one, and turn around to make another pass, or to anchor the boat, how do you know you are on the desired, 10 foot spot?

Most structures have little humps and small breaks which very few meters, and still fewer fishermen, would be

capable of reading. These humps and breaks are the very things the fisherman should be looking for, but a meter could cause the fisherman to miss them completely.

No shallow water should ever be worked with a meter; neither should one be used when working a structure deeper, where the location and direction of the structure is known. The only sound FISHABLE way to work the **shallows** and **known structures**, is by using lure sizes that will check all depths and positions of both, so as to strain the water. By using lures as directed, no water will be skipped, all structures can be contoured with no portions missed, the little humps and breaks become evident, all short fish movements will be noted, you learn to use markers and shoreline sightings for more detailed mapping, and most importantly, you begin to know the lake in greater detail.

A meter should be thought of as being an instrument to help speed up the mapping of lake bottoms, used to find, or locate, underwater bars, reefs, breaks, drop-offs, underwater islands, work brush, weedlines, rocks, etc., and their relation to the deep holes or channels.

At times the troller may want to follow weedlines, sharp breaks, or even run a certain contour, and a meter can be an aid in doing this; but once the weedlines, breaks or contours have been well established by shoreline sightings or floating markers, the fisherman can do a much better job without the meter. The above, also, holds true once a bar or reef has been worked and trolling runs and casting positions have been established by sightings and markers. An example of this would be a long bar or reef that extends quite some distance from shoreline. The meter can be used to find the drop-off, and a floating marker is dropped at this spot. This marker then serves as a guide far enough trolling runs to be made so that trolling patterns can be established by shoreline sightings, or it can be used to easily position the boat at the correct spot for casting.

Shoreline sightings are made by picking out two conspicuous objects on the same shore (or in the direction of the trolling pass) which are not too close together, then lining up the two objects (such as sighting a rifle). If shoreline sightings are made on each directional pass, pretty soon the proper trolling runs will be firmly in mind, and subsequent tests, or future fishing trips, will present no problems as to where and how a structure is worked. You can easily see why running a depth meter **only** will not teach the fisherman the make-up of his body of water, and how it should be fished.

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When working on underwater island that may be located quite some distance from shore, the meter can be used to locate the crown, or top, of the structure. A marker is thrown, and enough time taken to establish the shape of the structure. Then casting and trolling runs can be made in relation to the marker. At times the marker may have to be moved or relocated several times before the exact fishing pattern can be established. When possible, try to get shoreline sightings, in some instances this is not possible due to the distance from shore. In this case, the meter could be used to relocate the structure on future trips.

Many fishermen try to troll a crooked weedline or breakline with a depth meter. When done in this manner, it is an impossible task to keep the lures in position.

It is best to use the meter to check the weedline or breakline, and throw a marker on all of the extrusions or "points." This gives you a complete visible picture of the shape and directions. It then becomes an easy task to work it correctly.

A meter, when used correctly, and in its proper perspective, is the aid it should be. Depend upon it as the key to your fishing success and you will find a decline in catches. Use when needed, then cut the son-of-a-gun off. The depth sounder can be a great help, provided you can interpret what it shows. If you can't interpret what it tells you, you are better off without it. We go fishing for enjoyment, this becomes impossible with your head buried in a meter.

SUMMATION

Any tackle items used in fishing, must be selected on the basis of controlling as many factors as possible (Depth, Speed, Size, Color, Action) to enable you to have more consistent catches. The selection of proper tools alone will not assure this. Without proper presentation these **CONTROLS** will be lost, and by the same token, if proper tools are not selected, presentation is not possible and **CONTROLS** will be lost. However, in the selection of **TOOLS**, the whole purpose is to put into the hands of the fisherman those things that will allow him to make the proper presentation and to gain control of his fishing.

If proper tools are used and correct presentation made, and you're still having problems, then a serious analysis should take place. "How the devil is a piece of metal or plastic going to accomplish anything without some help?" In other words, the time has come to add another control —

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this is "self control."

There is no magic gimmick in tackle. There is nothing in gear that will provide a short-cut to success, and the sooner you can get going with the job of finding out the "WHY", and doing the things it takes for consistent success, the better off you're going to be. I call this, **Knowledge**, and if there should ever exist a 'short-cut' — this is it. If you get **this**, it will open up fishing horizons and experiences yet untouched by the average fisherman. This is fishing in all its glory.



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PRESENTATION OF LURES

The average fisherman will buy a lure, tie it on his line, cast it out and say, "Alright you son-of-a-gun, go out there and get 'em."

Sometime later when he does not see all the fish in the lake rushing to gobble up this killer, he remarks, "Boy, have I been suckered again."

The most common remark a traveling Spoonplugger hears, after he has spent hours, and possibly days, working out the keys to the lake is "He didn't catch those fish in this lake, I've fished it for years and have never caught any fish like that."

The skeptic has not caught fish "like that" because he is confused about lures and their proper role. There are many good lures and baits on the market. He could take the best of them and troll until the paint wears off, or cast them 'til the hooks fall off, but he wouldn't catch fish using them over the front lawn or down the center of main drag.

No one would raise an eyebrow in disbelief over this statement. But if I state that you can waste a full day's fishing by running lures, or placing them, in the wrong places, and the wrong way, then I get a completely different reaction.

It should be very apparent to you that very few fishermen understand that **MOST OF THE TIME, MOST OF THE WATER CONTAINS NO FISH**. All you have to do is watch them presenting lures and bait in a manner, and in areas where they will never be able to catch a fish. Better still, just note how many of the fishermen catch fish on any particular day — although most are using the same type lure. This is tragic, but understandable. It's because they don't know — they don't know.

You just can't catch fish unless you place your lure correctly, and where the fish are. So, next time you use one of these so called "killer" lures with no results — give some thought as to who or what is at fault.

Correct presentation of lures is a very important part of catching fish. If lures or baits are not presented **correctly** it is not likely any fish will be caught. So presentation cannot be emphasized too strongly.

Presentation of lures should be done both **CASTING** and **TROLLING**. Trolling is a very important part of successful fishing — casting, likewise, is very important. Most Spoonpluggers use trolling for **LEARNING** their lake and for

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LOCATING fish. After this is done, then casting comes into play.

There are many instances where only one procedure is advisable. This is due to the make-up of the structure, or the conditions of weather and water, and how fish are reacting to these conditions.

Some waters are so full of weeds it is impossible to troll to any degree. Others are so full of vegetation that only top-water or weedless lures can be used effectively. There are some that are, for all practical purposes, unfit for casting. You can just imagine fishermen going into the Great Lakes after salmon equipped only with casting gear.

At times weather and water conditions are such that it would not be advisable to go after fish (stragglers) by the casting route. Trolling would be the answer at this time, but a few days before, casting would have been the correct procedure to limit out in short order on lunker fish.

There are other examples where some situation calls for only one type of presentation, but the thing you must always be concerned about is presenting lures at the right place, at the right time, and in the right manner. This calls for both casting and trolling. There are very few waters where both cannot be done most of the time.

The important thing you must consider at this time, is not whether you prefer to cast or to troll. You must be able to take advantage of the fishing situation as it confronts you. You must go about your fishing in such a way as to make you a better fisherman. You should agree that this can be measured in results or in catches. **You must not LIMIT yourself to any one particular procedure.**

I have seen fishermen limiting themselves in casting and trolling by the gear they have chosen. I have seen them using boats and motors so big and so elaborately rigged they cost a small fortune, yet these fishermen are limited as to their presentation. A fisherman, under the above circumstances, could only proceed to the near vicinity of a productive structure and cast the shallows. It would be difficult and unlikely that he could position the boat properly for complete coverage of the structures. Usually, the fisherman who is not properly equipped with boat and motor is not equipped tackle-wise to efficiently do anything but casting. And in most cases, a limited type of casting. And as far as trolling is concerned, he is not equipped to do that with any degree of success.

If I seem to stress or dwell on this particular point, the reasons should be obvious. I am in a position to be well

aware of the problems it brings about, and the fact it is becoming so wide spread today. IF AT ANY TIME YOUR EQUIPMENT IS A CAUSE FOR YOU TO NOT CONTROL DEPTH AND SPEED CORRECTLY AND THOROUGHLY OR CAUSE YOU TO "SHY" AWAY, OR IS "TOO MUCH TROUBLE", THEN IT SHOULD BE REPLACED. Too many fishermen will not admit their choice of equipment was wrong, especially in boats and motors, and will continue to fish in a "hit or miss" fashion. They are "dead" as far as ever becoming a good fisherman.

Almost any presentation will catch fish at one time or another. And, almost any lure, or tackle will catch fish at some time or other, but the key to successful fishing is to take advantage of ANY situation. If one set of rigging, or one type of presentation will not EXPAND your fishing knowledge and success, then you should provide yourself with those that will — whether it be casting or trolling.

Let's go back to that remark I made in The Basic Movements of Fish. I stated that the fish were either in the shallows, in the deepest water, or somewhere in-between. What this means is that you must fish all of these sections to determine where the fish are. It also means, that you must present your lures and bait in a manner (and area) which will eliminate all unproductive water to arrive at the fish. You MUST present your lures correctly in the shallows, in the deepest water, and in the in-between water. It would be a sad state of affairs if after fishing a stretch of water, you had your doubts as to whether it contained fish or not.

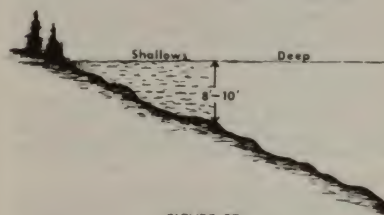


FIGURE 37

Figure 37 shows a cross section (side view) of a body of water. I have marked the shallow water, and the deep water. You and I must make a distinction between the two, for the purpose of presenting lures properly, and because the fish react differently in these two distinct zones of water.

SHALLOW WATER is designated as all water shallower than 8 to 10 feet. DEEP WATER is any water deeper than 8 to 10 feet. You might ask, "why did you choose this particular depth as the dividing line between the shallow water and the deep water?" — I didn't, the fish did.

You will observe in the drawing, that I show the shallows full of water, but in the deeper section I have removed all the water. This is the exact mental picture you should have when presenting lures or bait.

When presenting lures in the shallows you must work ALL sections — top, bottom, and all the water in-between. You must 'strain' this total section with your lures. Only in this way will you attain Depth Control in the shallows.

When you get outside the shallow zone (deep water), you no longer fish the water, you only fish the BOTTOM. As far as you are concerned, the only use for all that water, is to support the boat. Your whole concern is the bottom make-up. Here, both casting and trolling should be aimed at fishing the bottom — not the water.

When presenting lures or bait, shallow or deep, your total effort will be directed toward the Control of Depth and Speed. The correct procedure is to FIRST eliminate the shallows, and then proceed to the deep. You can't put words in a fish's mouth. You can't tell him where he is going to be at any certain time. You can't tell him the depth nor the particular location in the lake. BUT, the main reason you follow this procedure is you will begin to discipline yourself on Depth and Speed control. This, plus repeated checking of the shallows, will play an important part in your Mapping and Interpretation. In time, what you find and observe in the shallows will relate to what is found below.

At times, it is permissible to go directly to a particular spot in deep water before checking the shallows. BUT, this is not done unless you are completely aware of the structure, conditions, and the present movements of the fish.

TROLLING.

If a fisherman took into consideration the many types of water available, should he expect to consistently catch fish if he doesn't troll? Note I used the word "Consistently", which adds more dimension to the question.

I have no hesitation in answering this with a quick NO. Trolling is an important phase of fishing. Some areas have restrictions on trolling and some water conditions make it impossible to troll, so there is little a fisherman can do about these situations. But, in most instances, trolling is allowed and water conditions are such that it can be done.

Don Nichols, who I consider one of the best fishermen of our time, if not the greatest, states the case for trolling quite well when he wrote the following piece on trolling.

"Probably the least understood method of fishing is motor trolling for fresh water game fish. For the inexperienced fisherman, and also for some experts, trolling means dragging a lure or bait in a hit or miss fashion behind a boat as a last resort after all else has failed.

Trollers are accused of being lazy by many fishermen, they are often maligned by some outdoor writers, and are legislated against by certain states. **The primary reason for these attitudes is ignorance. Most fishermen do not realize that motor trolling, when done correctly, is an art. It is a method of fishing that requires skill and know-how. It can't be learned in ten easy lessons but must be studied and practiced.**

There are a number of excellent reasons why you should add trolling to your fishing skills. The most important of these is that trolling allows you to find fish faster and with less wasted effort than does any other method of fishing. How the fish are caught after they have been found is up to the individual fisherman. He may continue to troll or, as most Spoonpluggers do, stop and cast. He may fish with live bait if that is his choice. The important consideration is locating the fish as quickly as possible. Trolling is the most efficient way to do this.

Another advantage the troller has over the caster in locating the fish is that by covering the water much faster he is more likely to be aware of a fish migration when it occurs. He is much more likely to be in the right place when the migration takes place. This is especially true when fishing big water or new water.

On those days when migrations are short or non-existent, and only scattered fish are to be found, a fisherman who knows how to troll can still catch his limit. Under similar conditions he will be lucky to catch a fish or two if he limits his fishing to casting. Again the

reason is the same, by trolling he simply covers a great deal more water than he possibly can by casting.

Another reason for trolling that is often overlooked is proper lure presentation under certain conditions. Speed control is a good example. Most fishermen realize that lure speed is a factor in making a fish strike but few realize just how important a slight difference in speed can be. There are times when it is not possible to cast and retrieve a lure consistently at the speed needed to make fish strike. A troller can maintain an exact speed simply by checking his throttle setting while the caster must rely on feel. Lure speed can be especially critical when "walking" a Spoonplug on an underwater bar. The more accurate speed control obtainable by trolling is one of the reasons why fish are sometimes caught in large numbers on a certain spot when trolling while few are caught casting to the exact same place.

Nothing in fishing is more important, than maintaining proper depth control. I could fill these pages with this subject. Trolling, in so many instances is the only way it can be done. For this reason alone, the fisherman should learn how to troll.

One reason for trolling and is unique to the Spoonplugger. To properly fish underwater structures (bars, sunken islands, etc.) you must first locate and then map these structures. It is an almost impossible task to find and map underwater structure by casting but a good troller can do the job easily and quickly.

A resume of reasons for trolling wouldn't be complete without mentioning the enjoyment you will get out of trolling with someone who, because of age, infirmities, or lack of experience, cannot successfully catch fish on his own. People in this category get as much enjoyment out of catching a good fish as does the more experienced fisherman. The fisherman who understands how to troll can take his family fishing with complete confidence that the smallest member able to hold a rod will catch fish. I personally get more enjoyment when the kids catch a fish than when I catch one myself. Many times they catch the largest fish of the day when trolling.

Early fishing success while trolling encourages the young fisherman, and the inexperienced, to explore other methods of fishing with the result he learns to cast and in time becomes a good fisherman. Wives becoming adept at playing big fish on rod and reel are eager to learn how to cast and to try other methods of fishing.

I have only touched on some of the more important reasons for learning how to troll, other reasons could be added. Suffice to say in conclusion that to be considered a well rounded fisherman you must learn to be a good troller as well as a good caster. Trolling will not only add to your enjoyment of fishing but will also result in larger and more consistent catches and, some of our romantic outdoor writers to the contrary, fishermen do go fishing to catch fish."

* * * * *

As I observe the average troller fishing his particular body of water, I find his greatest restrictions are **those that he inflicts upon himself**. Namely — improper equipment and lack of knowledge as to "how" and "what" trolling is all about.

Equipment that I normally see being used is good for one thing only — dragging a lure. A long, limber rod will not allow you to troll correctly. You have no 'feel', lures will not perform, lure losses will increase, more tiring — just a lousy set-up. A limp line, usually used in conjunction with this type of rod gives a tremendous "bow" to the line; affecting control still further. Even if a fisherman has the knowhow, he could not do the job of trolling adequately with this type of rig.

On the other hand, a troller with the proper rig could be just as handicapped in achieving the proper results, if he does not know **why** trolling is important and **how** it should properly be done. We would venture to say that the caster, who only casts the shoreline and who has not the foggiest notion about presentation, has a better chance of catching a fish than the troller who does not know how to present lures properly in trolling!

On one occasion, I was instructing a fisherman in the proper procedures for successful trolling. The particular lake we were fishing was large and the structures were long and rather flat, extending into the lake in some instances a quarter of a mile or more.

Shortly after getting on the lake, I threw a marker in water that was a good quarter mile from the nearest shoreline. We then went to the shoreline and began to discuss trolling techniques. During the discussion, he interrupted several times wanting to know why I had thrown the marker in the middle of the lake. I asked him to be patient, and explained that if he trolled this section of the lake properly, he would wind up hitting the marker.

Having fished this particular body of water before, I had thrown the marker on the end of a very large, structure. The particular spot where the marker was thrown had a long, narrow "finger" off the main bar, and the end was at a good depth, and made a sharp drop-off into the deepest water in the area. It was a simple matter to drop the marker in the correct position as well-defined shoreline sightings had been made some years before.

After making many trolling passes and following instructions, he burst out laughing; he found he was heading closer and closer to the marker, and had to swerve the boat to keep the motor from chewing up the marker.

To be a successful troller, it is important that each and every lure be kept in proper **position**. You might ask, "How would I know if any particular lure was in or out of position?" — Very simple, if the lure runs 4 feet deep on the troll, then try to keep it in water that is **4 feet deep. Whatever depth a lure runs, try to keep it in that depth of water.** Each lure will "fish" the water if this is done. At the same time that the water is being fished correctly, the fisherman is "contouring" the bottom to arrive at the spot where the fish will be. The fisherman will leave the lake knowing that he not only fished the water thoroughly, but he has knowledge as to where structures are located, their condition, and their direction.

To be a successful troller includes knowing how to maneuver a boat. To do this I start the troll and slowly turn the boat toward the shore until the lure starts hitting bottom, (in some lakes when working the shallows with smaller lures, the lure will come in contact with weeds instead of the bottom). When contact is made I slowly head the boat toward the deeper, or open water, then as the lure starts running free, I slowly head the boat back toward the shallows until the lure starts bumping again. By continuing to maneuver the boat in this manner, the lures will always be in position and the contours of the bottom will be followed, regardless of shape.

The degree of correction of the boat is so **slight**, that the lure is never but a few degrees from directly behind the boat.

What would happen if you moved your boat in until the lure started bumping and you just continued to let it bump without ever turning toward deeper water? If this were done, you could start bumping and come into a large flat area; and would then find yourself going out across this big flat

area, getting farther and farther away from fishable water. Also, **you would lose your 'contouring.'** If it keeps bumping — **keep turning out.**

Now let us suppose you slowly maneuver the boat away from the shallows and the lure starts running free. If you did not begin to correct your heading, and slowly start back toward the shallows, you could shortly find yourself out over 50 feet or more of water, and the lures be completely out of position. **If the lure keeps running free — keep turning back.**

In teaching trolling, one of the main problems I find is that the fisherman **OVER-CONTROLS**. He does not **SLOWLY** correct the boat heading, but hastily over-controls, and before he knows it the boat is completely **out of position**, and before the lures make contact or come-off running free, the boat is so far out of position a lot of water has been missed, and it takes time to get the lure back behind the boat again.

When maneuvering the boat in trolling, you have several things to accomplish: keep lures in position (depth control), learn the make-up of the bottom (mapping and interpretation), keep lures fishing at all times (speed control), arrive at the fish. If you do not accomplish these things, you will be 'dragging' your lures rather than 'trolling' them.

A subject seldom discussed is the position of a troller, or trollers in a boat. This can make the difference between correct presentation and whether trolling becomes a chore or a pleasure. On occasions, I have heard a fisherman make the comment that Spoonplugging is work. He doesn't know it, but what he is saying is that he doesn't know the mechanics of trolling or casting. He is probably the kind of fellow that is not interested in doing much of anything that requires a little discipline, effort, or thinking. The Spoonplugger is actually taking the **easy route**. This is especially true in trolling, as he is letting the motor and lures do most of the work!

However, if a fisherman does not know how or where to sit in the boat, or is not using the correct gear, nor does not know how to hold the rod, fishing can become a chore. The easy route in most things is the best route (unless you get it to the point of doing nothing).

We have discussed the proper gear for trolling in our study of "tools". These tools were discussed, not only for proper presentation, but certainly for their ease of presentation as well.



FIGURE 38

In Figure 38, focus your attention on the position of two trollers. The fisherman running the boat is positioned to the right of the motor, facing slightly toward his left; he is steering the boat with his left hand, reel in right hand (more in the palm of the hand rather than holding with a pistol grip) the rod is across his lap and can be supported with the knee, or can even rest on the side of the boat. This position allows him to be comfortable and relaxed. He has very little exertion or rod movement unless he desires to direct his lures on turns by raising or lowering his rod tip.

The second fisherman should be seated far enough forward in the boat so that each fisherman has no problem of interfering with each other, and this position stabilizes the boat for easier maneuvering. He should be facing toward the motor, working from his left side. He is holding the rod in his lap with both hands. Since his rod is low, he exerts little or no effort to allow his line to swing in against the side of the boat on a turn to the left. On a turn to the right, he doesn't have to do anything, unless he desires to make his lure "cut across" on the turn, which is easily done by raising the rod tip.

I have seen fishermen sitting in a boat in the correct position, but trolling from the wrong side of the boat. Such a man will be steering the boat with his left hand, but has his body in a twisted position with his right arm flung out over the side of the boat and holding his rod in a pistol grip fashion. He is unable to control the boat properly in this position, and he certainly has no control over his rod. The contortions that take place when he gets hung on a snag, or when a fish takes, are unbelievable to behold.

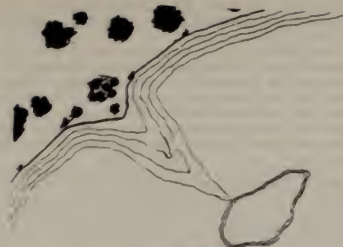


FIGURE 39

In Figure 39 a top view of a portion of a body of water is shown. It shows shallow water along the shoreline. It shows a bar, which is the most common structure used as a migration route. It also shows the deep hole or channel. You should know by now that fish originate and spend most of their time in deep water. When they migrate and scatter in the shallows, the path they take is along structure, in this case the bar.

When trolling the shallows, you will normally pick out a section of a shoreline, and this section might be quite long. In fact, at times, in smaller lakes, you may troll the shallows completely around the lake before beginning your work in deep water. In order for you to eliminate the shallows by trolling, the selection of lures must be such that ALL depths are covered thoroughly. This would mean your lures must run at different depths. Just pulling one lure through the water, in the shallows, would in no way eliminate the whole section. It would only eliminate that part where the lure was running correctly. This means that to cover the shallow water in a particular area, you would have to make several passes, using lures which run at different depths.

When you start your deep water work you will no longer be concerned with any great portion of the shoreline. From this point on your presentation of lures will not be over a wide area. It will be on a narrow path leading into the deep water. You will be concentrating on a possible migration

route that leads the fish from deep water to the shallows, and vice-versa (Figure 39 - the bar). Not only will the area be restricted, but it will not include all of the depths, such as you had in the shallows.

Your selection of lures in trolling deeper water, must be such that you can reach as much of the migration route, or structure, as possible. This means all depths, and all sections. You must make your trolling passes in such a way, that all lures used, will BUMP or WALK on the bottom. If you make a trolling pass, on any section, and your lure does not work directly on the bottom, you may waste a trolling pass.

Normal trolling will not scare fish. They may be more "skittish" in the early part of the season when the water is colder, but as the weather and water warms, the passing of a boat is often times an aid. Different lengths of line would take care of these conditions if they should occur — longer lines in the early season, less line as it warms.

The shoreline would be a determining factor in the amount of line you let out. A shorter line would be used in trolling along a crooked or irregular shoreline and a longer line used when trolling a straight shoreline. The shorter line length would make it easier to follow all the crooks and turns. A longer line is necessary in reaching greater depth.

In trolling, the path the lure takes can be controlled to a great extent by the position of your rod tip. If the rod tip is high, the lure will "cut across" on all turns. But if the rod tip is low, the water drag on the line will cause the line and lure to follow the path of the boat to a greater degree. If a boat holds two trollers, the one on the "outside" of a turn should put his rod tip low allowing his line to come against the side of the boat. The "outside" line will then be kept safe from the motor and the lure will not cut across or tangle with the other line.

Another thing which might be mentioned is the problem encountered after you reach the 15 foot depth. The amount of line used, the type of line used, or the lure types used to reach depths below this 15 feet will separate the men from the boys. It becomes increasingly more difficult to have control beyond this depth. The "feel" starts to disappear, interpretation becomes harder — fishing in general just becomes more difficult and tiring. To cap all this, as depth increases, the fisherman has to become more exact. Fish react to depth in such a way that they are more difficult to catch and more exact presentation must be made in order to make them take. BUT, you must not pass up this deep

water trolling just because it is difficult. Working this water or trying to place your lures correctly in this water, is the finest teacher around. It may take some time for you to become exact, but it will be well worth your effort.

If I appear to have put a lot of emphasis on trolling, you are right. In my opinion it takes far more skill to become a good troller than it does to become a good caster. For generations fishermen have been instructed in the proper procedure for casting, but never on trolling. There is a definite purpose for every trolling maneuver. And in the final analysis, it is trolling that will tell you where, when, why, and how to cast. I can't say the same for casting.

Trolling will be a constant reminder of DEPTH and SPEED control — casting will not. If you limit yourself to casting, or overdo it, pretty soon you will be putting faith in the size, color, and action of your lures, rather than in Depth and Speed control. You can put this in your pipe and smoke it, because it will happen.

Trolling will also more quickly eliminate unproductive water, greatly facilitates and shortens the time of mapping and interpretation, allows a greater area to be covered to find fish, produces more "straggler" (Remember these fish are important on those days which produce little or no movement), allows more varied and better speed and depth control, competes with modern day traffic, makes fishing a family sport, no casting skill is needed, allows the use of lure weights and sizes which may not be usable with the available casting rig — plus many more.

While Spoonpluggers are taught the importance of trolling, this does not rule out casting by any means. If you want to become a good fisherman you must be in a position to do BOTH in a sane and intelligent manner.

CASTING:

When discussing TOOLS, I indicated I was not going to talk about exotic or specialized equipment and skills. The same thing applies here, when discussing CASTING. These 'fancies' may have their place in the overall picture of fishing, but what part they play for you, is your business.

As far as I am concerned, whether you are a good caster, really doesn't matter. If you can cast good it will be an AID, but certainly not a necessity. A youngster who can't cast at all, but has to fling the lure out, such as when using a sling, has just as much chance of catching a fish, as the guy with the fancy gear, and who can "drop it in a bucket"

— but doesn't know where, why or how.
The real thing involved in casting is the placement of the lure, so you can control **Depth and Speed** — at the same time — in the area you are working. This requires a little more knowledge than being able to make a cast 'right on the button'.

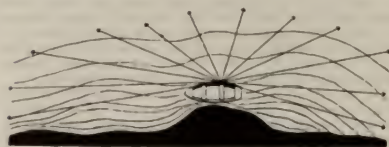


FIGURE 40

Figure 40 shows the most efficient position for boat placement when casting a shoreline. Your preference, or existing conditions, should determine whether you stand or sit while casting. By placing the boat in a position close to shore, both the shallow and the deeper water can be covered from the same position. If you have a fishing partner, one can work the shallows while the other works the deep water.

You could use weedless or topwater lures when the shallows are choked with weeds or other growth. But, in less weedy areas, and in open water, you should use various size lures to effectively test the different areas and depths. When working the deep water sections, allow the lures to sink to the bottom before starting your retrieve. Should the bottom contain fine moss or any growth which may foul the lure causing it to leave bottom, you should stop your retrieve and allow the lure to settle back before continuing. At all times be aware of speed control.

If you limit your casting to **VISIBLE** objects, such as brush, stumps, weeds, pads, etc., most of the time you are casting to the wrong places and wasting your time.

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FIGURE 41-A

FIGURE 41-B

Figure 41-A is a top view of a section of water, Figure 41-B is a cross section of the same area. Each figure shows two locations for positioning the boat. "A" represents the boat fairly far out on structure. "B" represents the boat anchored near the weedline or shallows.

If the boat is anchored at position "A" to check out the shallows along the edge of the weedline, it would mean that a cast could only cover a small portion of the weedline. The retrieve would immediately pull the lure away, and the balance of the retrieve would likely be a wasted effort. Position "A" would create quite a problem for working different depths correctly along the weedline. It would be practically impossible to work the deeper water of the structure from this position. In almost every case, working 'down-hill' limits Depth and Speed control, regardless of what type of lure you use. It would be possible to dangle a jump type lure over the side of the boat and have some results; but overall, position "A" would not be a choice location.

If you were to place your boat in position "B", casts could then be made adjacent to the weedline, and the lure would be in position (and fishing) for the total length of the retrieve. From this position, different size lures could be used to thoroughly check the different depths in the shallower water. When you cast to the deeper sections, from this position, you would be able to work all portions of the bottom easily and correctly.

Many times fishermen will hit a nice fish on the troll, but when they try to anchor and cast they draw a blank. They return to trolling and pick up additional fish. Again they anchor and cast, but still fail to make contact. They return to trolling to get additional fish and are reluctant to spend any more time casting. It's easy to see that after a

few of these experiences they eliminate casting all together, and begin to feel they can't catch fish by casting.

There are usually two reasons why this problem occurs. The number one reason is due to improper positioning of the boat for casting. The boat may be in position, as far as reaching the area but the trouble lies in the boat not being in the right position to control Speed and Depth as they did on the troll. A good rule to follow is to position the boat so the lure will approach the spot **in the same manner as it did on the troll**. This may not be possible on every structure, but in most instances it can be done.

The second reason for trouble is due to switching lure design. Instead of using a free swimming, bottom bumping lure on the cast as they did on the troll, a change is made to another lure, usually a jump type, and all the depth and speed control is lost for that particular time. There are times when switching lure design will not be out of order, but in many cases, especially when the fish move up in warmer water, the same depth and speed control must be maintained as on the troll.



FIGURE 42

I suppose **DEPTH** and **SPEED** control on the cast has brought about more **METHODS** of fishing than any other thing. This is primarily due to the position of the boat in conjunction with the lures being used at the time.

Figure 42 shows a fisherman (Writer) working a steep shoreline. His boat is positioned out from the shore, and he is making his casts in toward the shallows. He is using a 'jump type' lure, such as a jig, spinner bait, or worm. In fishing this area, he finally finds, in order to get a fish, he has to work his rod and retrieve in such a way as to allow the lure to bounce down along the bottom. And, often his own special jerk or twitch, "just sets their tails on fire." He can't wait until he gets back to his typewriter to tell the fishing world about his great discovery.

So you and I have another **METHOD** of fishing to add to the long list of names, such as "Lazy Bay" method, "Take It Easy" fishing, "Flutter and Sink", "Sliding Fishing", etc. What this does to the beginner and the average fisherman is to completely confuse the issue. They become baffled with all the different **methods** thrown at them.

How much better it would be to simply tell them, "In order to control depth in this case — casting toward a steep shore, with the boat anchored over deep water, and with the type lure being used — I couldn't just make the cast, and start a straight retrieve, because just a few cranks of the handles, would have had my lure out of position. In order for me to check the depths correctly, I had to let the lure work down along the bottom. This required that I move the lure only slightly (speed control), then pause and let the lure settle back to the bottom. Another rod movement or reel movement, would allow it to go deeper on the steep bottom. In fact, on most of the movements, I could not take up any line, and when I got into the deeper sections, I actually had to 'feed' line to maintain depth control."

Instead of telling his readers these things, he leads them to believe there is some 'magical' know-how involved, and **this** was responsible for his success. This is pure 'hog-wash', and has no place in successful fishing. I doubt if it ever dawned upon him, or his readers, that a 'beginner' could have beaten the daylights out of him (catching fish), by merely positioning his boat close to shore.

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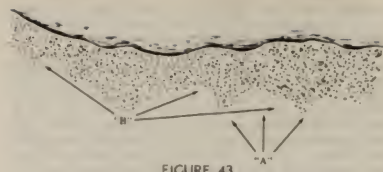


FIGURE 43

Figure 43 shows a long, crooked weedline. This weedline (or shoreline) is not straight, but bends in and out with short, "fingers".

Most fishermen would place their boat in position "A" — out from the weedline, and make casts toward shore. The "expert" casters would have you believe that your lure must check every little crook and turn and hole along this weedline. Unless the weedline was completely visible very few of his casts would cover the water correctly.

Position "B" would be the preferred location, simply because the area could be checked more easily and effectively. The exact weedline could be established, and casting would require no special skill since only the tips of the "fingers" would be worked to establish if any fish were along the weedline (or shoreline). If there are no fish on the "fingers", it is not likely there will be any in the pockets. If fish are located on the fingers, it is then an easy matter to check the pockets.

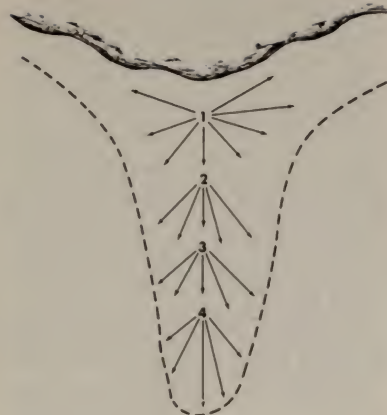


FIGURE 44

To fully cover a long structure (bar) by casting, the boat should be moved to several positions as shown in Figure 44. Position one (1) would allow you to fan cast and to cover all of the shallow section within reach. From this position you can check any weedline, or any other break, that may be present. And, as your casts swing around toward the deeper section, the lure would be allowed to sink to bottom before the retrieve is started. After this section has been worked, the boat would be moved to position two (2). This would be about where your casts reached from your previous position.

The same procedure should be followed as in the number one (1) position.

Continue to move the boat and follow the same casting procedure until the last position is reached. The last position should put you within reach of the breakline or drop-off.

In almost all cases a breakline at the end of a structure will occur at a shallower depth than the deep water sanctuary. In other words, fish will drop off into a hole or channel before stopping. There are only a few isolated cases where the deep water sanctuary will be on the structure.

It is not likely the sanctuary will ever be found directly off the "contact point." It could be to the right or the left, or so far out that it couldn't be reached from any position on the structure. This is one of the reasons you often have to exercise patience for the fish to move. However, when fish are found at a breakline or a drop-off, and the action stops after a few fish are caught, it is wise to immediately go deeper off the breakline. In many instances additional fish can be caught. This would also hold true on suspended fish, such as walleye, sauger, northern, etc., found off a breakline. The action and commotion of catching fish may cause the fish to drop deeper, and a deeper lure should be used immediately when the action slows, or stops.

Lures used for presentation on a structure such as this, must allow Depth and Speed control in all areas. You might state, "Is there any particular style, or category of lures that I can use to be sure I am fishing the water correctly. If so, how long should I cast in each position?"

On a normal structure, and on a typical fishing day, use two lure types before moving the boat to a new position. I use a sinking, free-running bottom bumping lure first. Then I use a jump-type lure, such as a jig, worm, etc. Normally 5 casts with each will test the area. I personally never use more than five (5) casts to check ANY area or position.

If live or dead bait is used, the procedures would be the same, with the exception, on the retrieve the bait would be moved a short distance and stopped, moved and stopped, until the total retrieve is made.

SPEED CONTROL IN CASTING.

When casting any portion of a body of water, the fisherman is often not aware of the importance of speed control, and will not vary his retrieve speed to find the most effective one. Many fail to take into consideration just how MANY fish can be caught out of a school once it is found. So when considering speed control **we are talking about the thing that**

makes a fish take, and also what will determine just how many fish in the school can be taken.

Let's work a structure that you know is potentially productive. You first check the shallow water with a free swimming lure. You start with the normal retrieve speed. By the third cast you have increased your retrieve slightly and bang! — a good fish takes. The next cast produces another fish. This indicates a movement has occurred, and it is at this point that speed control comes into its own. It is here that speed is increased even further, and continues to increase until it is about as fast as the reel can work. Without an increase in retrieve speed, it is not likely **many** of the fish will be caught.

Let's suppose you did not begin your casting with a free running lure, but instead started to fish with a jump type lure, such as a jig or worm. The first cast produces a fish, the second produces another, but subsequent casts draw blanks. An experienced fisherman would increase his speed as much as possible. Knowing in most cases this type of lure will not allow enough speed control, he would immediately switch to a free swimming lure, and really wind it up.

In checking the bottom on deeper structures (speed) there are two main types of lures that can be used. (1) sinking, bottom walking, (2) jump type. It might be well to explain here why I call these types of lures (jigs, spoons, weighted worms, etc.) "jump-type" lures. I do it because these lures should be jumped a distance, then allowed to return to bottom. You will note I did not say **dragged** a distance, then **stopped** on the bottom. Neither did I say the retrieve should be slow and steady with the lure **sliding** along the bottom, these lures should be jumped.

More speed **control** can be had with a walking lure than with a jump type. This is especially true after the water temperature rises. However, at certain temperatures and certain weather conditions, when fish are rather deep and inactive and non-chasing, the jump-type lure has effective speed control.

Let's assume your first cast to a deep section of structure results in a good fish being taken on a walking lure. The second cast, to the same spot, produces a second fish. This indicates a school of fish has moved up on structure. It is at this time that you increase your walking speed. This increased speed will be the controlling factor in how many fish you take from the school before it is lost. This includes not only the speed **BEFORE** the fish took, but also **AFTER** the fish took. A hooked fish should be brought right in — no

messin' around. Get him out of the school fast, and keep him coming. These fish must be kept in a frenzy of competitive spirit, and speed control during the total time of the action must not be lost. There is usually only a very short time to make "hay" and the speed control will determine just how much hay you make. (This is the time it's good to have a fishing "buddy" along to help the cause).

In a casting situation such as this, some fail to allow the lure to sink all the way to bottom before starting their retrieve. The lure must sink or the cast is lost. Watch the line, it will tell you when your lure is on bottom. After the action stops, the deep structure should be checked with a jump-type lure before leaving the area. The fish may have become "spooked" or the majority may have dropped back into deeper water. If a jump-type lure is used in this instance it may produce another fish or two. They may not chase a fast walking lure, but may strike a jump-type — if it's put right in their face.

For the opposite situation let's say that in working the deep part of the structure you did not start with a walking lure, but instead with a jump-type. You make your cast and let the lure sink to the bottom, take up the slack, then, with a short twitch of the rod tip, make the lure jump for a short distance. The next jump — and you're in business.

In order to increase speed with this lure, you would move the rod faster and give a longer twitch or jump before allowing it to settle back. It might be necessary to increase the lure weight in order to speed up this action. At times, when using a jig, the shape of it could be a factor. Instead of a bulky, round head, it should be a slim or thin, washer type with less water drag. This would allow it to sink and move faster.

Quite often, since the jump type lure is restricted in speed control, (loss of depth if speed too great), it is wise to immediately switch to a fast walking lure.

Many times a light spinning rod, will not allow full control of speed BEFORE or AFTER a fish is hooked. Instead of making a GREAT catch, you only made — a catch.

Another **Speed Control**, often overlooked is when fishing with a jump type lure, such as a plastic worm, etc. Many have the belief that he should let the fish run with the lure before striking. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Fish "inhale" a lure so fast the movement can hardly be followed with the naked eye. They can "exhale" it just as fast. If a fish moves off with the lure, then in some way he is unable to get rid of it. And, unless he is solidly hooked, you are taking a

chance of losing him. You should strike the **instant** there is an indication a fish has taken it. By waiting, the odds for putting him on the stringer are slim.

Whether casting into the shallows or toward deep water, **regardless of what type lure is being used, speed control must be kept in mind.** Not only from the standpoint of making the fish strike, but after contact is made so you can catch MORE fish. After all, catching fish is the name of the game, so why reduce your chances by refusing to observe the advantages of speed control while casting?

Back in the 1920's my Daddy would often hire an ole mountain man to paddle the boat for us as we cast the shorelines. He knew most of the spots where fish had been caught. At the time, I thought he knew more about fishing than any man alive. Later on, I realized he didn't know too much about fishing, but there were several things he taught me that I would never forget. Possibly the things he said and did had an influence on my looking into the facts of fish behavior.

He would paddle us into a "fishy looking" place and say, "Hold up boys, until I get the boat positioned just right." After carefully maneuvering the boat, he would then say, "OK Bob, you cast over there toward that rock, and you Sonny (Me), cast over toward that stump."

Many times before either of us had completed the retrieve, he would say, "Let's get out of here, he ain't there". With this remark, he would move the boat out before we had a chance to make another cast.

At first this caused me to almost cry. I wanted to try all my little pet retrieves, actions, and those great colors, I had spent days creating. Later, I realized, as he did, it would have been a waste of effort to spend any more time there. **If the fish had been there, we would have made contact.** He had taken great care in positioning the boat, so we would be sure we made the correct presentation.

Although most fishermen today, have heard in some fashion, the importance of correct lure presentation, most take it lightly and are concerned, and depend, only upon Action, Size and Color of their lures, to put fish on the stringer. Few realize these are **aids only**, and **not** the major controls! They spend hour after hour in certain sections of water, trying all the little twitches, movements, wiggles, colors, or combinations — trying to create a fish right out of thin air (or water).

At times he may "stumble" upon some water that contains a fish, and for the rest of the day tries to duplicate that "certain something" that caught that fish. He can't understand why the other fish refuse his creation. I have often wondered if he ever gave any thought to the idea, that maybe the fish he caught, **was the only one that saw his lure all day!**



FIGURE 45-A

FIGURE 45-B

Figure 45-A is a cross section of a structure, such as a "bar". The fish have migrated up to the positions shown. Figure 45-B is a top view of this situation. In it are marked 4 casting positions. Study them carefully and list them in the best order. Remember you have to check speed as well as depth — **at the same time.**



LIVE BAIT vs ARTIFICIAL

To make sure you have the full message on Depth and Speed control, and that you understand these terms when applied to different structures and their locations, it would be wise to again classify lures. I will put them into two groups, (1) Live bait, and (2) Artificial. Each of these have a role to play in fishing. You may prefer one over the other, but both may be necessary at certain times and under certain conditions.

Most any game fish can be taken on live bait in one form or another. We will approach the subject from the standpoint of your becoming a better fisherman, since this is the reason behind this book.

In discussing live bait versus artificial, let us observe two things.

- 1 - "Biting" and "Striking"
- 2 - Depth and Speed control

A game fish is designated as a fish with a pugnacious nature. He can be made to **strike - not feed**. The strike is produced by the unusual, the odd-ball, the different. The strike is a result of his disposition, so to speak. Nature's selective evolution, the survival of the fittest, eliminates the weak, the hurt, the sick, and the dying. It is the nature of fish to destroy these — to strike them. They represent the odd-ball, the different, and the unusual.

In the case of feeding (biting), this action is caused by the normal, the usual, the natural.

You must keep in mind that a fish is cold blooded, and his metabolism is controlled by his environment. Percentage wise, his feeding time would be of short duration, and at times may be non-existent for rather long periods. Lucky, then, is the fisherman who goes fishing and finds the fish **feeding**. Giving him the better odds, he might be on the water when this occurs about five percent of the time. This leaves the greater part of the day, or season, for his fishing to be done when the fish are not feeding. Thus, he has to rely mainly on fish **striking**, if he is going to have success in a consistent manner.

Live bait represents the natural, the normal food supply, the regular bill-of-fare. It represents a way to catch fish, provided it is in position at the feeding (biting) periods.

Since the feeding period covers only a small part of the fishing day, live bait would have to be made to appear unusual, different, in order to prove effective during the non-feeding period. The fisherman could hook the bait in such

a way as to make it "act" a little different, such as sticking it on a jig. Thus, it would produce a strike in preference to the natural bait which is all around. But it is rather difficult to present live bait correctly. In an unusual manner or unnatural state. Depth and speed control becomes too difficult. It would be better for the live bait fisherman to represent the normal or natural as near as possible, as it would be very effective during the feeding periods.

Artificial lures, on the other hand, have the ability to appear natural or normal to a degree. They can be made to imitate the natural food, and will produce when fish are feeding. At the same time they appear normal, they also have a degree of the unusual. They have the "aids" of color, size and action more readily available. These aids, plus speed and depth control, are additional advantages which live bait does not have.

The crappie is a rather slow reacting fish. And in fishing for them, depth is very critical. It is doubtful if they will change depth as much as a foot either way to take a bait or lure. If they do, it would be done in a rather slow, lazy, hesitant manner. If a school of crappie is found at 6 feet, it would be a simple matter for the live bait fisherman to place his bobber at that depth, keep it there, and obtain the correct speed, even if it was absolute zero. Whereas, the artificial fisherman would have quite a chore holding the depth, on a cast or a troll, at any degree of speed. He might have the right depth and speed in one cast out of dozens. And it would be practically impossible for him to locate the fish and maintain the correct combination, if their depth was unknown. To partially offset this advantage, the artificial fisherman, when casting or trolling, could use a bobber on his line to check depths, and he can hold the correct depth once it is found. But overall, the live bait probably has more in its favor for crappie fishing.

Let's be working a potentially good spot at 35 feet in a very clear water lake. Due to the clarity of the water, movements and migrations would be quite limited. Due to the depth involved, the artificial lure man could have difficulty with depth and speed control. With this situation, let's add a bad or marginal, weather condition, such as the second day after a cold front. Movements and migrations would be reduced still further and any movement would be for only a very short period. The live bait fisherman would more likely be aware of this short movement since he is sitting there with his bait in position (speed control). The fisherman using artificials could very well miss the unusually short migration

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(while checking out another structure).

Do not rule out the artificial man in a situation such as this. A Spoonlugger would work out the lake thoroughly, concentrate his efforts at the correct depths, check his speeds to a greater degree and would be successful. But in looking at the overall picture, live bait would be better for the average fisherman.

Let's look at several other conditions where live bait should be considered.

Suppose you are fishing a deep, clear, natural lake for walleyes. You find the water cold, and the fish are moving very slowly, and the only place you can find them is on the deepest structure. You are working a long underwater hump or bar at 35 to 40 feet. It would not take much imagination to see that live bait, such as nightcrawler, minnow, etc., would be the best bet. In this case the bait could be slowly trolled; by drifting, rowing, electric motor, or by forward or reverse power of the outboard. This is a perfect example of where "back trolling" would produce the slow speed necessary to maintain the depth control, and the best and easiest way to cover all sections of the structure.

The next situation shows a school of bass with their home area on a clean spot out in the middle of a channel, or a hole that is 40 feet deep. The clean spot is surrounded by quite a large area of 40 foot water, giving it a saucer-like condition. In this case, you would most likely find it necessary to fish straight down under the boat. Another instance where this type of fishing might be necessary is a school of lunker trout on a break at 75 to 80 feet.

The artificial man could use a jump-type lure with success at these times. His depth control would be equal to the live bait fisherman, however, the live bait fisherman would have better speed control. Speed at these depths would be critical, because if the fish were very active and chasing, they most likely wouldn't be here in the first place.

Other situations where live bait could give better speed and depth control than artificials is in the case of some rivers, sloughs, canals, etc., where the fish spend most of their time under brush, pads, weeds, hyacinths, etc. Open water that may exist does not have an appreciable increase in depth. The live bait fisherman can work close in and around this growth with better speed and depth control than one using artificials. However, when the fish move out into open water we have a different situation.

In certain types of streams, under certain weather and water conditions you would have better control by using

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live bait such as minnows, worms, crayfish, hellgrammites, and so on.

In some types of streams the fish may be located in an undercut in a bank or where floating islands provide cover for the fish. In cases such as this, when fish movements are slow, live bait can be "jammed" right up against these areas and the fisherman would get the best depth and speed control. When fish venture out on movement, then the artificial man would be in position for better control.

Looking at the over-all picture of Trout in streams and lakes, the bait fisherman for the most part would have better control as this particular fish is primarily a "bait" fish.

Big live bait put at deep breaks and breaklines in Muskie water has good depth and speed control.

In discussing the merits of artificials versus live bait, I sometimes get the impression that some fishermen feel they have been trespassed upon. This does not occur unless they are mainly from walleye country. While walleye is "king" in only a few of the north central states, their importance in these several states calls for additional comment.

Walleyes are normally "slow" fish; and extremely slow in early season. Most of the areas in which they are found have clear water, mostly deep, and with short seasons of warmer weather. Light affects this fish slightly more than it does some species, and he is a "night" feeder at times. His migrations often will not bring him as shallow as other species.

All of these conditions tend to put the live bait fisherman in the fore-front so far as to depth and speed control; but it by no means rules out the user of artificials. The fisherman who knows structure, movements and presentation will have no trouble catching walleyes on artificial lures. This is especially true in waters that are more dingy or polluted, AND WHEN THE WARMER PART OF THE SEASON COMES AROUND. Many times the live bait fisherman will not change his depth and speed control to adapt to these conditions and comes away empty handed, whereas the user of artificials will make a limit catch.

In areas where masses are fishing live bait for walleye, and at times with great success, it is sometimes a greater problem teaching structure, how to map, understand the water, depth and speed control, etc., than in areas where this particular fish play only a minor role. Actually, the live bait walleye fisherman needs this knowledge more than the fisherman using artificials exclusively.

Many of the walleye waters contain some of the best

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bass and northern fishing that can be found, but the live bait fisherman is not aware of it. Some use of artificials will not only improve his walleye fishing, but would make him more aware of the other species.

In recent years, walleyes and sauger pike have been introduced into reservoirs and in areas where they are not native. In some of these areas they have fared quite well, and are becoming a sought after fish.

The best depth and speed control with live bait, can be obtained in the colder weather when fish are in the channels and must be taken in 30 to 50 feet of water. The bait is normally used in conjunction with a weight of some sort. It is usually fished directly on bottom or under the boat with a slow "jump". The lure is allowed to sink back to bottom after each rod movement.

The fisherman may find a combination of live bait and an artificial jig produces better than either one individually. You might wonder why this is so? Was it due to the bait being put on the jig or was it the jig being put on the minnow? Was the fish feeding? Or striking? The answer is, it was due to putting the jig on the minnow, not putting the minnow on the jig. The fish "struck" in this case.

When fishing is viewed over-all, the artificial lure fisherman has many plus advantages over the fisherman who uses live bait exclusively.

Even though live bait does have depth and speed control in certain situations, it is so limited that it can hardly be compared with artificials. Particularly so, when strange waters are being fished. Live bait is no "tool" when it comes to mapping and working your fishing waters. Most of the time it is far better for a live bait fisherman to get married to one particular water, stay there, and not venture to strange waters — if he expects to work out the water in a reasonable length of time.



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WORKING TYPICAL STRUCTURE

Casting and Trolling

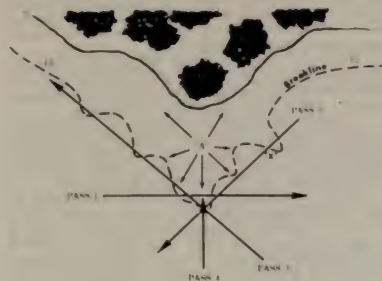


FIGURE 46

Figure 46 is a top view of a 'bar', extending out from the shoreline. All around the structure occurs a breakline at the 12 foot depth. The breakline in this case does not run around the bar in a smooth straight line. It has several 'fingers' or short extrusions located all around the greater structure. Fingers are found, to some degree, on most all good structures. When the movement of the fish occurs, you can figure the 'contact point' will be one of these fingers.

The finger (or extrusion) that they come up on will have the necessary ingredients for their well being. If these features are of permanent nature, the same finger will be used on every migration. It could be the finger at the tip-end of the bar, or it could be one on either side. The depths and 'breaks' involved would determine this.

The situation presented to you is — **find the fish**. Since you are not familiar with the structure, and do not know how the fish use it, your lures must cover the structure completely. Each lure used, must be kept in position and doing its part — casting or trolling.

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In casting the area, place the boat in the shallower water, such as position "A". This position should allow you to reach as much of the structure as possible. You 'fan cast' the area, taking enough time and different lures to thoroughly check all sections within reach. At times on a structure such as this, the position of the boat may have to be changed several times, in order to reach all sections. **Just be sure you reach all parts of the breakline.**

Too many fishermen, when trolling, will make one half-hearted pass at a structure, then go their merry way leaving most of the area untouched. It is foolish to find good structure, give it a pass, and leave it unfished.

To check out a structure such as this (Figure 46), a minimum of four (4) trolling passes would have to be made — as indicated. To **FULLY** check it out, two (2) additional passes would have to be made; trolling passes 2 and 3 would have to be made over, but **IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION**.

Let us assume that the fish actually came up on the short finger at position "X". Let's assume that the weather and water conditions are such that they do not come all the way to the top of the finger — at the time of trolling. Pass number 2 brings the lure to the finger on the opposite side from the fish. The lure bumps over the top, but when it comes off it does not reach down on the other side, and passes over the school of fish at the inside base of the finger. Now, reverse this pass (No. 2) and make it from the other direction. It doesn't take much imagination to see where the lure makes contact with the finger this time.

When trolling the shallows, the contours of the bottom are followed, and the path of the boat will swing and turn with the contours, but **WHEN WORKING DEEPER ON STRUCTURE, ALL TROLLING PASSES ARE IN A STRAIGHT LINE**, only in this way can a structure be fished, mapped or interpreted. Don't ever forget this.

You might ask, "How much **TIME** should I spend on a structure before leaving it?"

The question cannot be answered with a flat statement of so many minutes or hours. The situation that exists would determine just how much time should be spent. The nearest thing to a flat statement would be — "As long as necessary to be sure the structure is thoroughly worked at all depths and speeds. Then periodically return to the structure and work it again to see if any migration has occurred."

As you approach this question, you must bear in mind the very important fact — fish do not move constantly nor consistently.

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In checking a structure by **trolling**, enough time must be spent to allow enough passes to cover all sections. The size of the structure will determine the time needed for the job. A small, straight bar would certainly require less time than a long bar that might veer in another direction at the end. Other type structures such as humps, deltas, roadbeds, channels, breaklines, etc., would require a different time period.

In casting, as stated before, a half dozen casts should cover the shallow water. When casting deep sections, five or six casts with a walking lure, then the same with a jump-type should cover the area for one boat position.

Another factor that would determine how long a particular structure is worked is the size of the body of water and just how many structures are available. Some bodies of water have many potentially productive structures, while others may have only one. If a number of structures exist, then each should be checked to determine which has the best potential. A more thorough check of the better ones, or one, should then be made. If only one is available then all efforts would be concentrated here.

If good, productive structure is being worked from a boat without a motor, then most likely you should spend your time here. Without a motor, it is difficult to move around fast enough to find another structure.

When weather conditions indicate there will be no mass movement of fish, it's a good idea to concentrate on a structure known to be productive. Under these conditions, movements are short and you had better be in position when it occurs. It could be over while you are between structures.

If fishing pressure is heavy, many structures would already be occupied. If you have a good one it might be a good idea to stay with it, or someone else would take it over while you're gone, and a lot of valuable fishing time will be lost in trying to find another.

Each situation and each structure will determine the amount of time to be spent. The main thing is to spend enough time to be confident you know it thoroughly and that no movement has occurred.

The things I have just said, concerning the time spent on a particular structure, and especially the part about **which structure to concentrate upon**; reads fairly easy. **BUT**, when you get on the water, you may find you don't have a ready answer. I have solved any doubt that might occur,

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by going back to the 'basic movement', and recall — "when the movement period occurs, ALL the fish move. Some may move to a greater degree than others, but they all move."

What this means to you, if the fish are not moving on the structure you're working, they are not likely to be moving on another. So — you pick out the best one, and stick with it.

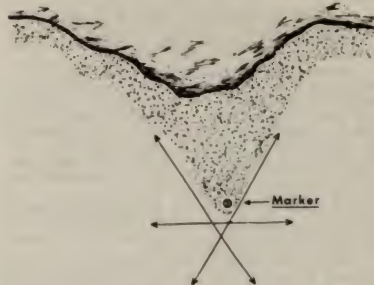


FIGURE 47

In Figure 47 we have a bar with a fairly deep weedline. This weedline serves as a "break", and when the fish migrate on the bar, this breakline serves as a stopping point for the mass of the fish. Some may move into the weeds, but most will be grouped on the outside, or scattered along the weedline.

It's a smart move to throw a marker on the point of the weedline. It will give you a reference point for your trolling passes. Your passes must be enough to cover all portions of the weedline — just as close to it as you can work. The trolling passes shown are six in number, one in each direction, and in my estimation this is the minimum number required. You should know how to cast it.

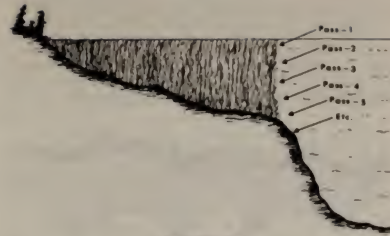


FIGURE 48

Figure 48 shows a very important fishing situation for many parts of the country where clear, deep lakes exist. This is a situation where there is a tall weed growth all around the shoreline. At times they may run to 20 feet. In trolling this situation you must cover the "face" of the weedline with lures that run at different depths. The trolling runs, and lures, should be STACKED. Only in this way can the tall weedline be covered. When casting, keep your boat close to the weedline, as discussed previously.

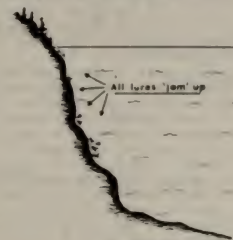


FIGURE 49

Figure 49 shows a steep portion of a shoreline. This could also be representative of the rip-rap along a Dam or along the sides of a causeway (a road crossing the lake).

Here again, in order for you to work this shoreline correctly, you must "stack" your trolling passes and lures "jam" up against (bumping) this steep shore. In casting, place your boat close to shore, working your casts up and down the shoreline, checking all depths and speeds.



FIGURE 50

In Figure 50 we have a long, crooked weedline. This could also represent a long, crooked shoreline, with small pockets, short bars, etc.

In trolling you must make every effort to keep your lures in position. The weedline is the "break" and you must get your lures just as close as possible to this breakline. It doesn't mean that you could not "draw" some strikes a few feet from the weedline, but never assume this will happen. If lures are kept in position and as close to the weedline as possible, you need not worry about your lures being in potentially good water.

If weeds grow completely to the surface and can be seen, little trouble is encountered in following the weedline correctly. But, in most waters, the outer weeds do not come all the way to the top and the weedline cannot be seen. Several methods could be used to troll and work this weedline.

You could foul-up your lures with a sufficient number of passes which would, in time, possibly give you a decent trolling pass — provided you took enough shoreline sightings.

The weedline can be followed by using a Depth Meter. The meter would show the weeds, but could give trouble in keeping lures in position. The boat may be in the right spot when the meter reading is made, but it is unlikely that the lures would be for most of the trolling pass. The bad part

with this is you never get any better, each pass can be just as bad as the one before.

The best and fastest method to use in trolling a weedline is to locate the weedline by some visible method. The position of the so-called "fingers", or any bends, in the weedline that may exist should be known. By placing markers to give visible reference to the "fingers" and bends, the path the troll is to take is clearly outlined. Some of the markers may have to be repositioned to find the trolling runs that are easier to make and are the most effective.

At first glance this may seem rather difficult and time consuming and hardly worth the effort but it does not take a great deal of effort or time, and the results will speak for the efforts expended. Establish the trolling pass by shoreline sightings and the next time this area is fished there may be no need to place markers again.

It is not necessary to show, or know, all of the small details on the weedline in order to make an effective trolling pass. The lure does not have to get back into all of the dips or "pockets". This would be difficult to do, but, if you make the pass close to all of the "fingers" the water will be sufficiently tested. If in any area fish hit, it is then an easy matter to cast all of the pockets.

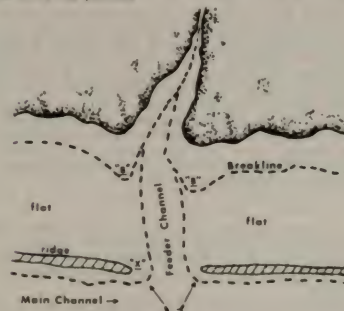


FIGURE 51

Figure 51 is a closer look at an area where a feeder stream or flow of water cuts through the flat and thru the bank of a "Delta" type reservoir. I suggest, if this isn't perfectly clear, go back to the section where I discussed the Delta. In that discussion I said the most potential spots in a 'delta' is where these feeder cuts exist.

Normally, the movements of the fish will be to the breaks and breaklines on the upstream side of these cuts. However, you must not consider this to be true in all cases. When checking or testing the area, all portions of the cut should be gone over thoroughly.

When checking the area trolling, the passes should be made from many directions, with each pass covering a couple hundred feet on each side of the cut. They should cover the tops of the ridges, the breaklines of the main channel, and the feeder stream channels.

The normal position in casting would be to place the boat on the upstream side of the cut (Position "X"). Casts must reach both sides of the cut and the ridge and breaks along the channels. If all areas cannot be reached from this position, then the boat must be moved to different locations. Quite often, the best position is directly on the ridge, and many times the whole area can be thoroughly checked from this one position.

During the discussion on the Delta, I pointed out, that these 'cuts' would tell you which structures along the shoreline are potentially good. Normally when I check a Delta type lake, I first take a look at the structure along the shoreline. By doing this, I can see the areas where a flow of water has moved toward the main channel. I throw the motor in high gear and take off. When I see an indication of a feeder cut, then I thoroughly check the shoreline structure at these spots ("B" Figure 51). This not only checks for fish migrations, but it gives me a picture of the type cut, depths, etc. It tells me the areas out at the main channel, that should be worked later.

* * * * *

In looking for good structure in a body of water, you should always be conscious of the fact that any type of underwater hump or island can be highly productive water. These are structures, breaks and breaklines usually of the first order.

Humps are important due to the fact that fish are reluctant to go downhill on the backside thus the hump would be the last stop toward the shallows. A hump on a shallow

water structure is a "break" on the structure, and you should realize that this break will most likely be the concentration point of the fish after migration occurs.

Underwater humps or islands that occur in the deeper sections of a body of water normally come in two categories: (1) Those that come within a workable depth, (2) Those that lie in, or near, the channels or holes and are 30 or more feet below the surface.

In the first category (1), you would be concerned with fishing primarily AFTER movement or migration.

Underwater humps or islands that lie deep under the surface are important for those times when weather and water conditions are such that little, or no, migration toward the shallows occurs. If the water is clear, or if there are adverse weather conditions, there could be no migration toward the shallows. And during the winter and cold water conditions, these deep water humps are important and should be worked. Remember, the home of fish is deep water and 30 to 35 feet is always an important depth.

There are several ways to find if humps or islands exist. If they occur in the shallow shoreline water or on structure, where you are working, your normal fishing procedures will find them.

If they are located out in the lake, below the surface, or below the workable depths of the average fisherman, they can be found by checking a contour map; using depth sounders, and (or) deep running lures. Making inquiry of local fishermen or observing any concentration of boats in open water is, at times, helpful. The lay of the land should help determine the possibilities. A deep gorge-type lake is not likely to hold any underwater islands; yet with a flatter, spread-out type with some exposed islands, there is likely to be additional humps or islands that do not come above the surface.

In many reservoirs the water level will change greatly during a season. You can make it a point to study the lake at these low water periods, noting all good bars extending out from shore, and all humps that would be under water at a higher water level.

In many cases, where the water level varies, markers such as poles have been placed on them to point out they are possible hazards to boaters. The humps and ridges found along old river channels, in many of the delta-type lakes, are marked by navigation buoys. This is also true in case of long bars that extend out into waters that carry heavy boat traffic.

When working a hump, it is best to throw a marker buoy on the crown of the hump so as to have a reference point for finding out the shape and direction of the hump. In the case of a rather long, crooked, ridge-type hump, several markers should be thrown at the ends and any place where the hump takes a turn. Outlining an underwater island or hump with markers is important for casting and trolling. Only in this way can proper interpretation be made and to determine how to properly present lures.



FIGURE 52

Figure 52 shows three types of humps found in lakes and reservoirs. Presentation of lures to these areas can be made both casting or trolling.

In trolling a shallow hump, it would be no different than working any other shallow structure. But if the hump cannot be reached with conventional gear, due to its depth, then lures will have to be taken down by weights attached to the line, or pulled down by leaded or steel lines. Trolling speeds from fast to slow should be thoroughly checked.

Lures used in casting shallow humps or islands would be the same as those used on a bar, but on the deeper humps a jump-type lure, such as a jig, weighted worm, etc., would be more suitable for the average fisherman. Speed control would be limited, but better depth control could be had.

Many times the crown of a hump is small. Normally, these smaller humps are located in the shallower water, and in many cases on a good productive bar. In casting them, it is not wise to anchor the boat directly on the hump. The boat should be located off to one side with the anchor in deeper water. The casts can be made with most any type of lures suitable to work the depth at which they are found. When working the bottom on a small hump, make the casts across the hump and walk the lure over the top.

When an underwater island or hump is quite large in

area, then the boat should be anchored on the crown, and by fan-casting around the boat all sections will be worked.

When working the islands or humps found in deep water, the boat should be placed directly over the structure and, most likely, the lures would have to be fished directly under the boat. If the hump is too deep for anchoring and casting, drift fish it. Go up wind and slowly drift the boat across the area, using the rod tip to produce jumps or action in the lures. Let the drift, or movement, of the boat take up the slack in the line prior to the next reel or rod movement. Allow the lure to sink back to the bottom after each rod movement.

This deep hump (or bar) is a fishing situation found quite often in deep clear lakes, where the major fish is Walleye. These waters can be quite cold, clear and the structures, such as long bars or humps are located in 30-50 feet of water. The natural "slowness" of the walleye under these conditions, would call for the use of live bait in many cases. This bait, such as night crawlers, minnows, etc., used in conjunction with a hook and sliding sinker, when slowly trolled over this structure would produce the best speed and depth control. This movement could be secured, by a drift, rowing, electric motor, or forward or reverse power of an outboard. Whatever manner of power, it must be slow enough to maintain Depth control, and should be in such a way as to cover all sections of the structure.

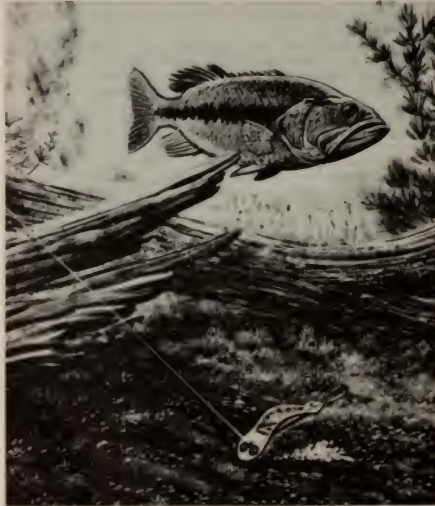
You should be aware that when discussing the working of Typical Structure, I have made use of an AID — the 'marker'. Probably while reading this, that expensive Depth Meter (or Sounder) kept popping into mind. I have already stated that this instrument can be a great aid, if used correctly. I stated that it could be used to locate structure, and in the placement of markers.

I also stated that it could be used to follow 'breaklines'. Breaklines such as, a 'fall' weedline, those along a channel or wide sweeping bar, ridges and breaklines on a 'Delta' situation, are good examples where it can be used while trolling. BUT, even here, without markers or shoreline sightings to serve as reference points, you would never LEARN your lake and you would never be able to IMPROVE a trolling pass.

I have also stated that you should never use the instrument when working shallows. You could leave it turned on, and maybe glance at it once in a while, but by no means use it to follow a certain contour when working shallows. **Your**

lures must handle all Depth control. Even the occasional glance, might cause you to 'shy away', and the lures stop fishing, and an area missed.

Any way you look at it, this instrument is only an AID, and you better use it as such.



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FISHING SITUATIONS

A great many fishermen live in a very small fishing world. That is, the waters they fish are restricted to a small area, the different types of water they fish are limited, and they fish for only one or two species.

In some cases, the fisherman is not able to change this situation. Although, he may wish to travel extensively and fish strange waters, he just never gets the chance to do so.

But, in the majority of cases, the fisherman does have access to several species of fish, as well as a choice of different waters. Yet, he continues to fish the same waters for the same species season after season; refusing to expand his horizons by venturing into strange waters. He may take his vacation at a distant lake, where he has heard there is great fishing. Then, spends a great deal of his time, and money, trying to find a guide who can show him *where* to fish. Most likely the weather will be bad, and the guide will tell him, he should have taken his vacation last month.

Why is this so?

Basically, this reluctance is based on the fact that the fisherman does not 'know' strange water. Through experience, or through some friend he has come to know some of the fishable areas in certain waters; and, through trial and error, has found a way to be successful on occasions. This knowledge may have taken years to come by, so he is reluctant to take his fishing time and fish waters about which nothing is known.

At first glance this reasoning may make good sense. But, to a Spoonplugger, there is no such thing as 'strange waters'. All are fished in a routine manner. There will be a short period of time when new water may be *unfamiliar* — but his fishing procedures are the same regardless of what water he is fishing. A Spoonplugger looks forward to the challenge of fishing new waters, and for different species. There is an added satisfaction and knowledge, to his fishing new water and working it out. The thrill of catching fish can become secondary to the thrill of putting a particular water 'in his hip pocket'.

The Spoonplugger can work out strange waters because he has learned the basic facts concerning fish. He is aware that deep water is the home of fish; that periodically they move from this deep water, not in a haphazard manner, but on well defined migration routes, and how far they move and how long they stay is dependent upon weather and water conditions.

Natural lakes come in all sizes and shapes. Some have

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masses of weeds, some have less. Some have hard clean bottoms, others have dirty ones. Some have several deep holes, others have one or none. Some have clear water, others have cloudy.

Artificial reservoirs also come in a variety of sizes and shapes. They contain many different types of structures and water colors. Some are built in highlands, some in lowlands and flatlands.

There are certain fishing waters, both natural and artificial, that are not normally classified as lakes or reservoirs, all of which play a part in fishing.

In a book of this size and style, it would be impossible to classify all the lakes and reservoirs, and discuss the why's and wherefores. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to do so, at this period of your study. But, I will discuss some fishing situations that **are important at this time.**

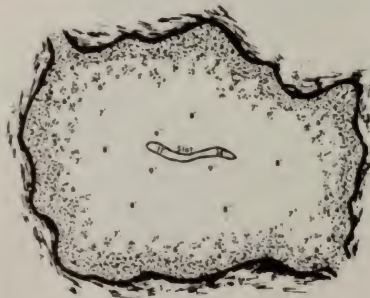


FIGURE 53

Figure 53 is a top view of a large shallow lake. It is several miles across. The areas near the shorelines are

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covered **solid** with grass, weeds, and pods. This extends out to a depth of 4-5 feet. Beyond the solid weeds, exist scattered weed patches. These are located in water 6-7 feet in depth. All the rest of the water, the greater part, is free of any vegetation. **But, the bottom is covered with a thick layer of muck.** The area free of weeds runs for a mile or more, and only increases in depth to 8-9 feet. Then suddenly at nine (9) feet it breaks to 11 feet. Upon investigation, here in the center of the lake, exists a long narrow slot. The width is only 50-100 feet, but it runs far over a mile in length. The deepest water in the slot, is a small section, 14 feet deep.

A lake of this type can whip the average fisherman. Even those who call this 'HIS lake', will have quite a few fishless days. The reason it creates problems, is primarily due to the fact the fisherman does not know where the 'home' of the fish is; and, to his not knowing what 'deep water' is. He may have read or heard at some time, that the deep water was the home of the fish. But, this did not apply in his case, as he did not have any deep water. And, HE caught fish and HE didn't catch them in deep water. He says, "I catch them up in the solid weeds and around the scattered weed patches. In the spring I murder the fish there." - Then you come back at him with, "Where do you catch them after that?" He says, Oh I don't fish much after that, it gets too hot, and the fish don't bite."

This fisherman didn't want any answers to begin with, far if he had wanted some, this situation presented no problems he couldn't handle.

If he had looked closer he would have noted that when he found fish, it was in the spring near the spawning season. Further observations would have shown him he didn't catch them EVERY day. Also, if he did catch them for a few days running, he did not catch them IN THE SAME PLACE every day. They might have been close, but not in the same spot. In fact, he never found them in the EXACT spot on any two occasions. This should have told him this area wasn't the HOME of the fish.

If he had extended his observations for a period of time, he would have found; the SEASONAL migrations of the fish, due primarily to the spawning urge, would have put the fish in, or close, to the solid weeds. The weather and water conditions were good, so the fish drifted around in the area for a spell. After the spawning, he would probably have found them, not at the solid weeds, but in, or around, the weed

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patches. Shortly thereafter they would seem to disappear.

It was at this time the fisherman decided to go home, and not go fishing much. **The fish did the same thing. They went 'home' — the slot.** They now spend most of their time here, and won't go very far, until about the time the fisherman decides to go fishing again — next spring.

These types of shallow lakes are a welcome sight to a Spoonplucker. The fish are all balled up in a small area, and ready for the plucking. The depth is so little they can't get away, and the best part is, he's way out there all by himself!

Due to the depths and flats involved, the daily movements of the fish are limited to the slot, or the edges of the slot. It would appear that you have the fish hemmed in. This is true, but the **problem** facing you, in making a good catch, would be in **presentation of lures.**

When working areas such as this in warmer weather, you may find you can't 'buy a bite' — CASTING. The warm water, plus the dirty bottom will limit your Depth and Speed control so much, you just can't make them 'take'. TROLLING the breaklines and the slot is the way to go. No areas are so deep they can't be reached with lures. Speed control, however fast, presents no problem, and Depth control can be maintained 'right on the money'.

Line length (and lure selection) becomes critical in trolling the breaklines, and the slot. The lures must not dig into the muck, nor should they be too far above it. The best way to find the correct line length is to let out line until the lure strikes the muck, then quickly retrieve until the lure is running free. If the lure continues to foul, wind in until it doesn't. Once the lure is running clear of the muck, drop line back very slowly until the lure is just skipping over the higher parts of the muck. The bumping of the muck will cause the lures to foul. Vigorous jerks of the rod will clear the lure in most cases, without a loss of depth control — if Spoonplucker equipment is being used. It is best to check the breaklines thoroughly before moving into the slot.

I get a chuckle every time I run into a situation such as this. I recall the first time Terry O'Malley ran into it in Florida. He and Vic Sanders were fishing a lake, similar to the one in our discussion, and it was hilarious the way they told it.

They had worked the breaklines without success, and had moved into the slot. When they caught the first fish, they immediately threw a marker. They reversed the trolling pass,

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and when the fish took, they threw another marker. This gave them a marker to the north, and one to the south.

They anchored and began casting the area between the markers. After failing on the cast, they went back to trolling. This time they made a trolling pass from the east toward the west — at right angles to the north-south line. This pass produced a double — both got a fish. They threw a marker on the west side.

The trolling pass toward the east, got another double. They threw the fourth marker. Now, they had the fish completely surrounded by markers. These, plus their observations of the fish caught, gave them the exact spot where the fish were.

"Now, by cracky, we're going to load the boat."

They threw everything they had at them, they moved the boat to several positions — not a fish. They went back to trolling, it was as easy as picking cherries. The fish were there, but **Depth and Speed control made the catch.**

There are many fishing waters where the same procedure must be used for **exact** Depth and Speed control. There are lakes where the bottom is covered with weeds, moss or brush. Though pressed for space, something should be said about those with brush.



FIGURE 54

Figure 54 is a cross section, or a side view of a 'Delta' situation, or a view of a channel with the breaklines running along the edges.

The amount of bushes along the edges of a stream channel in a reservoir, is normally greater than in any other part. The availability of moisture created heavy growth before the area was flooded. Once this growth is cut, the saplings and bushes spring up rapidly. By the time the area gets covered with water, we have a situation such as Figure 54.

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The ridge or the breaklines along the edge of the channel, can run for long distances without a break in uniformity. And, if you limit your presentation to CASTING, you will have trouble finding the fish. The fish will use the bushes ('breaks') in their movements and migrations. But, **the bushes do not tell you where the fish will be.** The bottom structure will determine what brush or bush might be productive. If you cast this situation, it is possible to work over and around this brush, but you will be limited on Depth and Speed control. It also isn't likely you will be at the right place at the right time, especially if weather and water conditions produce only a short movement.

Here again, TROLLING is the way to go. The purpose is to find the fish, and trolling is the easiest and best way to accomplish this. AFTER the fish are located, then you can see how CASTING works.

Lure size and line length must allow you to hit or tip the bushes with the lures. If you stay hung up all the time, you are either running too large a lure, or letting out too much line. If you **never** hit a bush, you are still wrong, and must change lures, or run more line.

Correct depth does not mean every little twig or bush has to be hit, or tipped. But it does mean all the 'peaks' should be hit. A few minutes is normally all the time it takes to get the right combination of lure size and line length.

At times it takes vigorous rod action to keep the lures ripping through the twigs and branches. Correct trolling gear will allow this to be done without the loss of lures or being continually hung. A free running lure that sinks will be better than one that floats. A sinking lure will be much easier to release from a hang, than a floating type. I designed the Spoonplug, so that when the lip comes in contact with an object, a heavy steady pressure will cause it to whirl up and over the possible hang, then immediately go back to the desired depth. If a Spoonplucker is staying hung up too much, he is either running too large a lure, too much line, or not applying enough pressure.



FIGURE 55

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Figure 55 is a cross section, or a side view of a Canal, Slough, or Stream. In various parts of the country, you will find shallow lakes that look just like this.

In water of this type, the over-all depth is just about the same. In some cases, the center section might be slightly deeper, but normally, no great change in depth is found. In some, the weeds will be on both sides, in others brush, or a combination of brush and weeds. In some, the shoreline will be 'under-cut' by the movements of the water.

The 'home', or the area, where the fish spend the greater part of their time is under the weeds, brush, or 'under-cut' in the bank.

In the past, I have seen fishermen try to use this situation, to disprove the fact that the deep water is the home of the fish. But close observations will show that there doesn't exist any deep water to speak of. **The whole thing is shallow.** It would be a natural thing for the fish to take up house, keeping under the weeds, brush, or bank. This gives them the needed protection from the light. If you ever fish an area such as this, and you find no deep water, and no cover, you'll not likely find any fish. But if you fish an area such as Figure 55, your best bet is to find the deepest water available under the cover (weeds, pads, hyacinths, brush, under-cut, etc.). In a situation such as Figure 55, you will find the fish in the weeds or under the brush most of the time. At movement periods they may venture out along the outside of the weedline and brushline, and if conditions are excellent out into the open water. During certain parts of the season, fish could be found out in the open area for quite a period of time. But this does not mean that on every movement period they migrate out into the open water. A majority of the time they move in or under the weeds and brush. A good way to check where they are is to troll the weedline and brushline. If you don't find the fish, it indicates they are under the cover.

To get to the fish back under the weeds and brush, can be difficult at times, but with a little thought and effort it can be done. A surface or weedless lure could be used to check their respective areas. But getting the lure rather deep in these weeds and brush would be better most of the time. You can maneuver the boat slowly along the weedline, dropping your lures, or bait, down through the weeds. More than likely the fish are rather dormant and not moving around very much, and you will have to find them. Often a certain spot, or spots, will be more productive than others. But in many cases, and especially in the case of weeds, the

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spot with the greatest action may change from day to day. As discussed under "Artificial vs. Live Bait", in situations like this, live bait will often give better Depth and Speed control than artificials.

In some shallow LAKES of this nature, the mass of the water is covered with weeds. Only a few narrow slots, or small areas, are free of weeds. In these cases it is difficult to find the fish in the weeds. I have found, the best bet is to concentrate all efforts at the clear areas. Often I have to wait for quite a period of time for the fish to appear, but when they move good — here they come.

You should, in all cases, look at your fishing waters in respect to the light conditions, and especially to the presence or absence of "Breaks".



FIGURE 56

Figure 56 is a top view of a portion of a river. This could be a section of a **flowing** river, or it could be an old river channel (cut-off) that was formed by the river changing course.

All rivers contain breaks and breaklines. Some are created by the raising and lowering of the water levels, while others are produced by erosion, or by deposits of silt and sand. Water currents tend to flow in a straight line, thus cutting into any shore in their path, with increased velocity. At

the same time this occurs, the water currents have moved away from the inside of the bend, slowing the water and allowing silt, mud, or sand to settle out. On the 'inside' of the bend, where the silt settles, a more shallow flat area is created. The cutting, which occurs on the 'outside' of the bend, produces many breaks, and deep water. The deepest water is always on the 'outside' of the bend, as indicated.

Other breaks and breaklines are created by erosion, which occurs when there is a difference in hardness of shoreline strata, and by cave-ins. Others are created by the 'cuts' of feeder streams. All of these breaks and breaklines are "markers" which fish can see and locate themselves by, when they move or migrate.

Migrations, or movements, during the warmer part of the season will be toward the deep, steep side, rather than toward the flat areas — which appears opposite of what occurs in lakes and reservoirs. The deeper channel is the home, and although the shore appears steep, the overriding factor in this case is the deep water and breaks that exist. The area on the outside of the bend, with its steeper banks; the breaks and breaklines; and the deepest water, is where you should spend your time.

The flat sloping sides, which the settling silt and sand created, have a very smooth surface — almost as smooth as an old bald head. Fish will not use areas which are completely void of breaks and guide posts. However, if you find a good break, or good sharp breakline on the "inside" — work it.

It is always wise to look at an area, not only from a daily standpoint but from a yearly standpoint as well. In fishing an area such as this, the shallow side and the backwater areas must be checked during the spawning and near spawning season (which is usually a high water condition). When fish are in this area, you have a scatter zone condition and it should be fished as such.

Note on the drawing the break which is shown on the sloping side. This break is a small channel or gully which was produced by a small stream flowing into the main river, or by drainage of the flats after a high water condition.

The cutting of this small channel or gully formed a perfect break in this large flat area. It also created a visual path from the deep water toward the backwater areas. During the spawning period this path would be used, since the waters on the steeper side would be less suitable for spawning. It would be wise to note any cuts, or eroded channels during a low water period, as this would be useful

information to have when fishing during spawning and high water periods.

During most of the season, stick to the steeper sides — especially, after the water level falls and temperatures become warmer. If a cut or break is found on the shallow side, such as the one shown, work and test it, but limit this testing to the points where entrance is made into the main channel.

Methods of presentation will vary in a river area such as this. When working the backwater areas under a high water condition, casting is easier and more thorough. When water levels are lower and the deeper breaklines and breaks are worked, trolling is far superior in every respect for locating fish and catching them.

• • • • •

Early season can be tough for many fishermen. Most rush the season and forget that water does not warm up as fast as "fishing fever." Under the colder, or early season fishing conditions, we often forget also, that fishing can be quite different from that experienced last summer.

In our study of structure, weather and water conditions, we normally think in terms of a DAILY observation. After all, we are interested in the condition that exists the day we go fishing.

This is good, and necessary — even essential. But when we consider the many weather and water conditions that exist from one part of the season to another, and the many different types of structure found in reservoirs, we are faced with the fact that if we want to be fishing the most productive structures, at all times, in reservoirs (man-made lakes) we better look at structure from a SEASONAL standpoint. In other words — are we on the best structure for this time of year?

The makeup of most natural lakes, and especially those of small acreage, do not have as many types of structure as do reservoirs. Normally, in natural lakes, the deep water is in the form of a hole rather than a channel. This hole, or deep water, may be limited in area and may be located in only one small area of the lake. The contours of the bottom, in natural lakes, are more uniform without the abruptness and changes of a reservoir.

Most natural lakes are also quite predictable in regards to what is present. The deep water consists of a hole or holes, most structure is in the form of 'bars' which run out from the shoreline, and some lakes may have humps or

underwater islands. If you go from one side of the lake to the other, or from one end to the other, there is, in most cases, not a great deal of change in structure types. The depths may vary to some degree, but in the overall picture the fisherman would not be concerned too much with which good structure he should fish — regardless of what time of year it is.

This is not the case when we consider reservoirs (man-made lakes). Here we must consider structure from the SEASONAL point of view if we want to be on the most productive ones. In reservoirs we have a multitude of different type structures. We have steep shores, flats, long bars, river and feeder stream channels, coves, bays, deltas, underwater islands, humps, etc. We have many man-made structures such as, submerged roadbeds, causeways, dams, borrow pits, etc. All of which means that in most parts of a reservoir the structure may, or will be completely different from those in another part of the reservoir. AND that this need not only be true from the lower end, up to the upper end, but could be true in just a short hop across the channel. It is for this reason we have to look at structure from a SEASONAL standpoint if we want to be on the best ones at all times.

In this study we will concern ourselves primarily with largemouth bass rather than other species. However, it would be well to view all species in the light of the following. Largemouth bass, as a rule, do not venture any great distance from a particular home area. We will view our study as his growing up in a particular area, then dying of old age in this one, home area.

In order for us to arrive at the best structure, from a seasonal point of view, let us review or recall some of the basic movements or migrations habits of the fish.



FIGURE 57

In Figure 57 is a cross section of a typical reservoir. There will be areas with long, sloping bottoms — with long

structures. A channel of some description, and areas that have steep, short structure with a quick drop off into deep water.

I have placed the fish in the channel in a typical winter or colder season position. During these colder parts of the season (late fall, winter, and early spring), there will be short, scattered migrations from the deep channel towards the steep shoreline and short structures. This, as you should see, would provide the shortest route to the shallows for a limited, scattered migration. This area would provide immediate access back to deep water. The fish would never be very far from home.

In the warmer part of the season (late spring, summer, or early fall) the movements of the fish will be toward the longer routes and flatter structures.

Figure 57 is the mental picture you should have in mind for the SEASONAL migration of fish. With this in mind we can now proceed to the question of staying on the best structure from a SEASONAL point of view.



FIGURE 58

In Figure 58 you are looking at a top view of a section of a reservoir. This particular section shows where the original river channel made a swing or a bend. The flow

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of water was from left to right. In studying this sketch you will note three sections; (1) - The 'inside' of the curve has produced a wide, flat area with long, flatter structures. (2) - The 'outside' of the bend in the channel has produced a steeper, deeper section close to shore, with short, deep structure. (3) - The feeder stream has produced a 'cove', or bays with varied bottom conditions and short structure.

Let's assume that in fishing the longer, flatter structures (A,B,C and D) during the past summer they were found to be productive. BUT, when they were checked in the colder part of the season, little success was had. What gives? What do we do?

During the colder period, structures A,B,C and D should be checked because at times they may yield a fish or two. In some areas fishermen use high speed boats to run from one end of the lake to another, checking and rechecking these longer, warmer season structures without giving any thought to other areas that might be more productive. This procedure produces a lot of action (boat that is) with questionable results. Weather and water conditions would have to be very cooperative to produce a nice string of fish on these structures during the early or colder parts of the season. Short, scattered movements, which these areas might produce, would easily be missed by a constant rider.

The above procedure is not recommended. After a short check of structures A,B,C, and D the fisherman should move to the other types of structure in the area.

With Figure 58 still in mind, the first section a fisherman should check would be that found along the deep, steep shoreline. The first casting or trolling pass might not produce a single fish, or it could produce a 'lone' fish. This would be quite normal for this part of the season. Several additional passes could be made before another fish is caught. Then a subsequent pass could produce a limit catch. The fisherman should consider himself very lucky if he finds a large number of fish moving at any one time.

The next area to check would be the feeder streams and coves found off the deeper sections. When weather and water conditions are good, the fish will move at times into the channel of feeder streams. From there they will migrate into the shallows. This is especially true if the water color is different from that in the main body of water. The short bars, found in the coves, can at times be highly productive in the colder part of the season.

The migration of fish from the main channel into the feeder stream channels is the reason why many fishermen

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score in bays and coves early in the season. These areas must be checked. They can be checked by trolling or casting. Casting, however would allow this area to be checked more thoroughly. The trawler could check some of the breaks (marked X) without too much trouble. He would, however have trouble keeping the lures in position in the small bays and congested areas. Casting, as indicated by the small arrows, would be better and would give better coverage.

An important thing to remember in working these colder season areas, is Speed control. You may find you are unable to troll slow enough in some areas to be successful. This means you will have to cast and use lures that give a slower speed.

At times you may find the fish in the shallow coves. Your casts are made up close to the shoreline, and a slow retrieve used, but you do not get any 'takers'. Then you find that you cannot make a straight retrieve, but you have to let the lure slowly sink before moving it toward the boat. The fish are taking the lure as it sinks. Sometimes they take on the first 'sink'. At other places and times, it's after you stop the retrieve and let it sink several times before completing the retrieve. There is nothing unusual about this — it's pure Depth and Speed control for the time. However, you better not get in a rut, less than a week later this speed could be out of date, and the straight retrieve becomes the one that produces.

There are several things that should be kept in mind when fishing these areas in colder or early seasons. (1) - Migration is mostly spotty. (2) - When a productive area has been found, considerable time should be spent working it over thoroughly. (3) - If a particular area such as a small bay off a steep shoreline (as in 'Y') has proven productive, other spots of similar nature should be looked for and tested. This would hold true for ANY area found to be productive at this particular time. (4) - The 'speed' will be slow.

Early season success in these areas can be bad for the average fisherman. He will spend too much time in these areas later on in the season. He will never realize what has happened to his good fishing, and will have to wait until the season rolls around again to once again have any appreciable success.

An important notation that should be made on Figure 58 is that when working coves and bays in the cooler season a good hand rule to follow would be; (1) - pick coves and bays that are close to the deepest water in the area (channel.) (2) - DO NOT SPEND TIME IN BAYS AND COVES WHICH

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DO NOT CONTAIN SOME SORT OF CHANNEL OR FEEDER STREAMS. In other words, if a cove or bay is a wide flat area, with no sign of a channel — stay out.

A good rule of thumb, to apply to seasonal movements of bass and the fishing in a reservoir, would be to start with the first part of the year. In the colder weather the first consideration would be to the steeper shorelines with the steep, short structures. As the season moves toward the pre-spawning season, check the steeper shores less and increase attention toward coves, bays, and short bars in these areas. These coves or bays, with their shorter structures, would be worked heavy during the spawning season. After the spawning season; leave the steep shoreline, most of the coves and bays, and direct attention to the longer, flatter structures in the main body of the reservoir. In other words, the spawning season would be the dividing line between the steeper, shorter (cold weather) structures and the flatter, longer (warm weather) structures. In the late fall, head back toward the colder weather side.

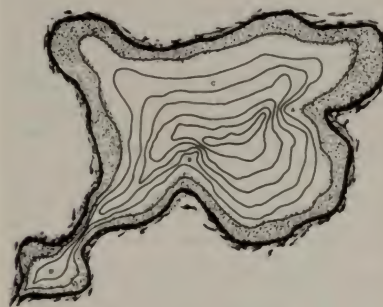


FIGURE 59

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In Figure 59 we have a top view of a natural lake. When viewing the migration of fish from a SEASONAL point of view it is somewhat different from that found in reservoirs. This does not imply that the habits and instincts of fish are different, but that in most natural lakes the STRUCTURES USED DO NOT CHANGE, BUT WILL REMAIN THE SAME THROUGHOUT THE SEASON. However, if by chance your natural lake has the same features as discussed in the reservoir — short structure — steep shoreline, etc., then the same principle would apply. Those natural lakes, with a stream flowing through, such as a lake chain, and some wider sections of streams, at times called lakes, often have features as found in reservoirs. Figure 59 is adequate for our study at this time.

Figure 59 shows the contour and structure available in a natural lake. Added to this, is a shallow channel or slough leading off to a small expanse of water. This could be a small, shallow lake connected to the main lake by a narrow channel.

The deepest water in the lake is a large section in the center of the larger body of water. This would be the home of the fish (winter or summer). In studying the structure available, there are two main structures in the form of a bar (A & B). The section marked "C" has no well defined structure, breakline, nor breaks. It is a flat, sloping bottom. The breaklines that occur on structures A and B are the only "steep" bottoms available. Thus they would be the **shortest** route to shallower water for limited or scattered migrations — just like the steeper sections of a reservoir. These would give the fish an immediate drop-back or access to the **deepest** water. So, in early season, and pre-spawn season, these steeper sections of the structure would be used.

As the pre-spawn season approaches, it is highly probable that in certain weather and water conditions, some fish may migrate, for short periods, into the feeder channel leading to the back-waters of the slough or small, shallow lake. The possibility of this would increase as the spawning season neared.

In the overall picture, the two main structures (A & B) would be considered as the main migration routes for both cold and warm seasons. In the colder pre-spawn period, the deeper breaks and breaklines would receive the **SHORT, SCATTERED, UNPREDICTABLE** migrations. As the season progresses the movements should become better and better and be more to the shallow portions of the structures. During the spawning season the most productive, shallow places in

the lake, should be in the near shallows of those two, main structures. If the lake has a slough or a small channel leading off into a bay, or a small section such as 'D', then this too should be checked. After the spawning season the same, main structures (A & B) would receive the migration as per weather and water conditions that exist.

One further thought might be in order at this time in regards to considering fishing from a SEASONABLE standpoint. Too often, during the pre-spawn and the spawning season, fishermen rush to the water expecting to find the fish in the shallows. They become puzzled when they don't find them there. They tend to forget that how far a fish moves on migration, and how long they stay is dependent upon weather and water conditions that exist at that particular time. They neglect weather and water, and if the deeper parts of the structures are checked at all — it's a short check — done in a half hearted manner. They return to the shallows **with no regard to where it is** because "the fish just gotta be there — it's that time of the year."

The pre-spawn and spawning season is a period of changing weather and water conditions. Fish react to these changes just as they do in any part of the season. Weather and water condition can wreck a spawning season. This is one of the reasons why there are missing age groups in most waters. A good rule to follow during this period is, the closer the spawning season the more fish can be **expected** in the shallows. Be happy when this occurs. One trip may be good and the next bad. One year might be good and the next bad.

Regardless how many times I say the speed control will vary during the season — reaching a maximum in hot weather, and a minimum in the colder — I find the average fisherman encounters a great deal of difficulty in adapting his speed control to the season. He has a tendency to forget how much this control can change during the season. He will tend to stick with one speed too long after a reduction, or an increase in speed is called for. Maybe he hasn't fished for a couple months, and doesn't realize the speed factor may have changed. You must remember that speed control can change from a trolling speed with the motor practically full throttle (5-10 H.P.) in the hottest weather, to a speed in the cold part, to a jump type lure that is moving so slowly it seems an eternity between each new cast.

My experience through the years has proven to me that few fishermen absorb anything but the operation and controls that were present when contact was made with the fish — a specific lure produced at a particular place, and

in a certain way. They failed at a later date because they assumed where the fish would be, and what it took to catch him. This kind of thinking results in failure. You must never believe that a particular presentation, depth, speed, or color is best. Being neutral in every respect on every trip is a must. Only after fish have been located is it safe to say that something appears best, but certainly not before, nor on future trips.

Whatever the time of year it might be, or whatever the weather and water conditions may be, regardless of how short and slow the movement might be, your best chance of catching fish is by fishing the most potentially productive water. You will never catch fish by fishing where they ain't.



FIGURE 60

Unlike bass, who may die of old age in a particular area, certain species of fish such as walleye, northern, white bass, etc., may travel considerable distances in a lake or body of water. But regardless of the species, **when fish are in a particular area, they use the structure that exists in that area.**

Two things have occurred in the last few years that require some thought when speaking of walleyes. First: his habitat has been extended. Planting is done in areas where he did not previously exist. Millions of fishermen are now exposed to this species, whereas, not too long ago he was confined primarily to lakes and streams in the northern, or colder parts, of the country. Second: In areas where he was formerly a prime fish, new dams have created waters slightly different from the natural lakes of former times.

Figure 60 is a top view of a lake created by a dam on a stream in an area where the walleye reigns, or a lake where he has been introduced.

When thinking about walleye in such a reservoir, you must think in terms of a yearly migration as well as a daily one. I am by no means decreasing the importance of a daily migration. The success on the day you go fishing is your primary goal. Yet, you will do well not to forget a very important factor, the yearly movement of this fish. It could well be the determining factor for success on that particular day you are on the water. You should already know that this species travels, for it is common knowledge that walleyes appear in the streams at the headwaters of the lake shortly after 'ice out' for spawning activities.

First, — place these fish at the headwaters of the lake shortly after 'ice out', or **after spawning activities**. You would fish with good success in the areas marked "A". Fish may be found along the drop-off, or around the stumps, brush and rocks in the more shallow water. The channel may not be more than 10 or 15 feet deep in this area.

For a time, fishing is pretty good in area "A". Then you find you are having better luck a short distance downstream toward the dam. Many fish are caught along the channel and on the slightly deeper 'break' areas, such as bar "B" (a delta condition) — which is 20-25 feet deep. You quickly note they are on the channel side — not on the backside.

A little later in the season, you find you have better success still further down stream, toward the dam, on the deeper breaks and structures which are not too far from the deepest water, such as bar "C", which reaches the 25-30 foot channel — or where the channel swings in close to the end. Or, on the deeper **breaklines** of a flat section that extends out quite a distance from shore, where the water in the channel is 35-40 feet in depth — such as "D".

As the hotter part of the season rolls around (July-August), you may find you have to move still further toward

the dam and deeper water. The structures and breaks in this deepest section of the lake will be productive, provided you can reach them; such as the underwater island or hump "F". However, in most cases, if the channel has a depth of 35 feet or better, you can still get walleyes from the structure near the channel such as "D" and "E".

The next season, start all over again — beginning at the shallower headwaters.

As stated before, the walleye is considered rather a slow fish. But, he does speed up as the water warms. In the first part of the season, you may find when working a lure such as a jig, you have to work it (on the bottom) with only a slight twitch of the rod tip. Then later in the season, you would have to go to a larger jig, and give a full swing of the rod to get enough speed control.

Normally, a jump-type lure, or even live bait would have the best speed control in colder water, but as the waters warm, a free-swimming bottom bumping lure is best.



FIGURE 61-A



FIGURE 61-B

During our study on movements of fish and in basic presentation of lures, the statement was made that when lures are presented below the 8 to 10 foot level (deep water) they must be presented ON THE BOTTOM. I also pointed out that some species of fish may have some slightly different characteristics. This reference primarily concerned fish that may suspend themselves at structure after migration. We are not concerned with suspension problems in shallow water, as all sections of this water would be checked, regardless of species.

In this discussion, I will be concerned with species such as walleye, northern, muskie, and white bass. These fish, when suspended, will take a free running lure in deep water (below 8 to 10 feet).

Figures 61-A and 61-B show a group of walleyes (or northers) that have migrated up to a breakline on structure.

These fish have not as yet moved up on structure, but are suspended slightly off the breakline. These species do not suspend themselves very far away — mostly just a few feet — and hardly ever exceeding 10 to 15 feet horizontally. The suspension is usually in relationship to the depth of the breakline, and in most instances the depth of the breakline will mark the depth of the suspended fish.

Depth control is very important when these fish are suspended, and you must be aware that these fish will at times take a free running lure as well as a walking lure, when in this position.

Just as a walking lure is correct when these fish are up on structure, a walking lure is also correct when they are suspended off the breakline. A walking lure as it comes off the breakline has the correct depth. A trolling pass made toward the break from the deep water side may not produce, as the depth is not likely to be correct — but this would not be so when the pass is made that allows the lure to walk OFF the breakline.

If you try to run your lures free-running without any regard to depth control, you're not likely to score very often. But by directing all efforts toward walking the structure, the lure is running free (when it comes off the structure) at the proper depth, and any suspended fish would be aware of it. This way you have depth control either bumping or free-running.

You should note at all times whether fish took the lure just before hitting the breakline, on the breakline, or directly after leaving the breakline. This tells if the fish are suspended. You then could select lure size and line length to secure proper depth (breakline) and work out from the breakline to determine what degree of suspension is present. Spend very little time doing this if fish are not located, get back to a walking lure.

Other species of fish such as trout, pan fish, crappie, etc., will suspend themselves off structure. Depth control for these can be maintained by the breakline, both horizontally and vertically. In this situation you should see that trolling would probably be the best way to become aware of this situation, and also to provide the best way to maintain depth and speed control. Casting would present no problems when the fish have moved up on structure, but when they are suspended off the structure it could present problems for speed and depth control.

To carry the suspension situation further, I will only mention salmon, and not go into other deep sea, or salt-

water species, (they would be the same). Since salmon have been introduced into freshwater lakes and reservoirs this species has gained popularity. Depth control for salmon in the shallows would present no problems, as your approach would be the same as for bass, walleye, northern, etc. It is when these fish move into deeper water that you may run into a depth control problem.

There should be no problem presenting lures at different depths over visible structure in deep water, such as a hump or underwater island. Where you may have trouble is when you are a long distance from shore, very deep, and with no visible structure to speak of.

The following covers an area in Lake Michigan, where the salmon is so popular. The controls necessary to locate and catch salmon in this area, is a guide to use in finding fish in other areas of the lake, or other salmon waters.

The newcomer to Lake Michigan, fishing for the different trout, and especially for Coho Salmon, can become quite confused as to what equipment is needed, and utterly perplexed as to the best way to go about catching fish. He is often misled into thinking that a lot of sophisticated equipment is needed; equipment that requires only a little less than a college professor's knowledge to properly use and operate.

Lake Michigan fishing is somewhat different from other types of fishing, in that the largeness of this body of water and the deep breaklines, miles from shore, normally will require bigger boats and motors than for the small lakes or reservoirs. However, there are shallow breaklines and weather conditions which will allow smaller boats and motors to be used with perfect safety. But, regardless of whether the deep or shallow breaklines are worked, the basic needs and controls used in this particular lake are no different from that of any other. Fish in this body of water react to weather and water conditions, and his instincts for survival, do not differ from that of other species in other waters.

There are two basic controls necessary to catch fish in this lake, as well as other waters. These being DEPTH and SPEED control. Size of lures, colors of lures, actions of lures, depth sounders, thermometers, down riggers, etc., are AIDS that assist in catching fish. But, at the same time, every aid in the book could be used and if the lure or bait is not put where the fish are, and moved at the right speed to make him 'take', you might as well be home mowing the lawn.

No one can control weather and water conditions; but,

DEPTH and SPEED can be controlled in such a way as to offset the effects of these, at least to the extent that you do not have to worry about finding the fish and making a satisfactory catch. With proper control, you do not concern yourself with haphazard presentation of lures, or running around trying to find where 'suitable' temperatures may be found. Even if it were remotely possible to locate fish by those methods, proper controls will arrive at the same place, in the shortest time, with the least effort and maximum success. One thing for sure, a fish doesn't have a thermometer in his head, and being a cold blooded animal doesn't have the remotest idea about water temperatures, or preference for any. Temperature controls body functions — not desires, or comfort.

Speed control in these waters isn't too extreme. But 100 RPM on the motor can make all the difference in the world. Speed is slow in colder water, increasing as the weather and water warms. Varying the speed to find the most effective one is important.

Depth control is much more than fishing shallow, medium and deep. Depth control means, WHERE, WHEN, WHAT, WHY, and HOW.

Figure 62 is a top view of 'structure' off Waukegan, Illinois. This is quite a large structure, as is most all of the structures in Lake Michigan.

I have not drawn in the total structure, nor in complete detail, but have placed on the structures those areas where fish are likely to be located. There are two important things to remember when seeking fish. First, you can have structure and no fish, but you won't have fish without structure. Second, when fish move on structure, they either pause or stop at a 'break' in the structure.

'Breaks' come in all shapes and sizes in the overall picture of fishing, but in the case of this body of water, the breaks come mainly in the form of a 'breakline'. That is, a place on structure where there is a sudden or gradual change in depth.

Breaklines in Lake Michigan are fairly constant in depth in a given area, and normally extend the total width of the structure (not shown in drawing). In fact, in many instances the same breakline may exist throughout the entire west side of the lake. Thus the fisherman should check for the same depth breaklines when fishing other areas. They may vary slightly in depth, but should be located close

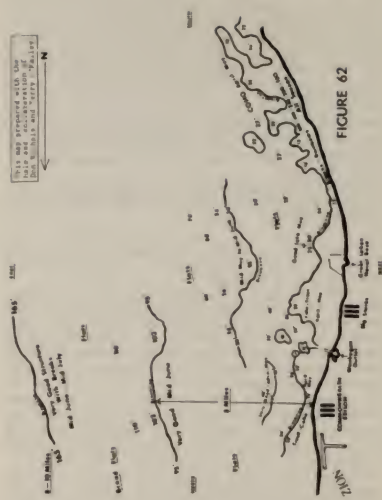


FIGURE 62

These breaklines were, in all probability, formed by former lake levels, water currents and movements of glaciers. Good areas and their location on the different breaklines have been marked with approximate depths.

On the west side of the lake, the breaklines can be quite far apart on a structure, and between these breaklines are large flat non-productive areas. These large flat areas are usually void of breaks in any form. The break in the structure is not a rapid increase in depth, but is a gradual slope — and, in most cases, the increase in depth will not be too great. The shallower breaklines will quite often not increase in depth more than ten feet.

The best spots along any of the breaklines would be on the northeast corners of all turns or curves, caused by the direction and flow of the glaciers in the formation of the lake. Here the sharpest breaklines are found and they contain additional 'breaks' — such as rocks, dips, humps, etc.

Since the Coho is a migratory fish, I have shown month dates that should be most productive for this particular area, as well as breaklines. Exactly which breakline, and at what depth the fish will actually be on any given date will be determined by the weather and water conditions that exist at the time. Your job is to check each breakline as the season, or weather and water conditions, call for. A shift in the wind could change the productive breakline. Study Figure 62 very carefully and thoroughly.

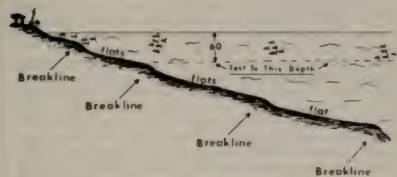


FIGURE 63

Figure 63 is a cross-section view of breaklines in the lake. In this drawing, depth control is shown in terms of feet. How deep do we fish or test?

When viewing the basic suspension of fish in most waters, I only consider the 'horizontal' in relationship to the breakline. But when considering certain varieties of saltwater fish, and the greater depths found in the ocean waters, I consider the 'vertical' in relationship to the breakline or breaks, as I move toward deep water.

With my depth control, I am not complicating the subject, nor am I placing the lures at depths where much time would be wasted. I am not stating that fish may not exist below these depths at certain weather and water conditions; but, I am saying that you will have the desired results if you follow this type of depth control. Instead of moving to greater depths in feet on a particular breakline, it would be better to move to a deeper breakline; if, after thorough testing, no fish are found.

I will suggest the sizes of Spoonplugs that could be used to control DEPTH, in feet. These lures were specifically designed for DEPTH and SPEED, **both at the same time**. When a certain size is used with a certain amount of line, there is no fear that correct depth is obtained for that lure; then if the lure passes the fish at the correct speed he will take it. When using a No-Bo Trolling Line, with all of the stretch removed, and with color markings every 30 feet, additional control of depth is had. This line, used on the Spoonpluggers T-45 rod, and the #101 trolling reel, is adequate for fishing this lake.

The seven sizes of Spoonplugs (500, 400, 250, 200, 100, 700, 800 Series) will normally check all breaklines which may exist down to a depth of 50 feet. When breaklines are located at 100 feet, or better, then additional depths should be checked. This will call for some aid in getting the lures deeper, and this can be accomplished by using a wire line or a down-rigger. **The deeper the breakline, the deeper the mass of fish will be located.** In working the deep breaklines, the two smallest lures (500 and 400 Series) may very well be dispensed with.

Let me suggest a procedure that I have found quite satisfactory. The shallow structures and breaklines (near shore) can be checked for fish by running all sizes of Spoonplugs, bumping all bottoms as far as they allow. These same lures can be used 'free-swimming' out to, and beyond, the 50 foot depth.

Then I approach the 95 to 100 foot breakline. The upper water would be checked with a 250, 200, and 100 series lure. I could run them simultaneously or individually. While doing this, I would use a 200 series on a wire line or on a down-

rigger set at 25 feet.

I would work along the breakline for quite a distance. If no action is had, I would re-adjust my down-rigger or run more wire line to the 35 foot depth. (All the while checking the upper water with the 250, 200 and 100 series). Normally, regardless of weather and water conditions, this control will suffice for a breakline of this depth.

If no success is had, I proceed DIRECTLY to the next breakline using the same depth control. The only change that will be made is to check below the 35 foot depth before moving on to a deeper breakline. After checking at the 35 foot depth, check the 45, then the 55-60 foot level before proceeding to a deeper breakline. Subsequent breaklines would be checked in the same way.

You should remember that Coho (like other fish) become more active at different periods of the day. If you feel that you might have missed the fish on a particular breakline, check it again.

As with other fish, light conditions have an important influence on the depth at which salmon will be found. Early in the day and again in late afternoon, you will generally find the fish shallower than during mid-day. For this reason, if you are catching salmon over a breakline and lose them, be sure to check deeper before moving to another breakline. Conversely, if you lose them late in the day, check shallower before leaving that breakline.

One rule of thumb to keep in mind is that when fishing breaklines shallower than 60 feet, fish will generally be found closer to the surface than they will be when over deeper breaklines. Check all depths, but concentrate on the 5 to 25 foot depths when fishing the shallow breaks.

In mid-summer, 20 to 40 feet will usually be the most productive depths unless water and weather conditions are ideal. If conditions are ideal, **many salmon may be found suspended 10 to 15 feet from the surface over a breakline that is 100 feet or more in depth.**

When using a down-rigger, and too many 'break-offs', tangles, premature releases, etc., are experienced, remove the release mechanism and replace it with a light monofilament line (4 to 6 lb. test is usually sufficient). This will cure the release problems and produce more fish.



FIGURE 64

Figure 64 shows a trawling pattern for checking breaklines. The trawling pass should be along, or parallel to, the direction of the breakline. The path of the boat can swing in and out along the breakline, thus showing you the actual breakline and, at the same time, allow you to determine the area where the fish are located. Most of the time, the fish will be located somewhere on the **down-slope of the breakline**.

It takes little imagination to see that if the trawling pass is made **across** the breakline, that only a small area is checked, and there is little likelihood that fish would be found at this particular spot.

As I finish up this particular section, there is probably one thing bugging you — "How do I find or follow the Breaklines if I have no Depth Sounder?"

As I have stated before, the Depth Meter is an aid, and in this instance would serve that purpose very well. Fortunately, or otherwise, you may be in the same boat as I have been in the past — you do not have one.

There are several ways that I have overcome the problems when fishing areas such as this. When possible, I check contour maps, to see the approximate depths and possible structure or breaks in deeper water. Shoreline sightings can give me the approximate directions, etc. I also have "markers" handy in case I can use them. Lots of times in a situation such as this, I am unable to use either for finding or following deep breaklines.

I always look for a group of boats working an area. This normally tells me that there is structure of some nature in the area. Provided, of course, the FIRST boat didn't stop there due to his motor conking out. This happens quite often, especially in smaller lakes.

The thing that I have depended upon the most in the past, is just what I used to find, Crappie schools as a youngster. **I SEE where they are.** The forage fish, shad, alewives, etc., use structure also, and will stack themselves along a breakline. The oil slick that this produces is not only visible, but produces a strong fish odor when the boat moves through it. At times you have to make allowances for the wind drift of this slick, but this presents no problem. How do you think the birds find the areas where the fish are? Where these bait fish are stacked, is normally the area on the breakline where the fish you are after are located.

GET THE HECK OUT OF THE TREES.

I am still discussing Fishing Situations, but the subject matter to follow, contains so much fishing information, relating to all sections of this book, I am giving it a title — "Get the heck out of the trees." Two very important fishing situations — the Causeway, and the Rip-Rap along the dam — are discussed here only. Don't just READ this section, STUDY it. By this time you should know why each statement is made.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's, I was covering most of the south "preachin'" fish behavior, the importance of structure, how weather and water played an important part in successful fishing and what was necessary to catch big fish consistently. During this period, I ran into many "Yankees" from the north who were in the south for the winter. Many of them were shown what SPOONPLUGGING would do.

It took several years for me to find out why I never heard from any of them when they returned north and fished their local waters. It seems that some of them had reasoned that bass in the south were different from those of the north, so the same techniques would not apply. But the main reason given for not applying Spoonplugging to their local fishing was because their natural lakes were full of weeds, and it simply "would not go over in their type of lakes."

I asked many if they had tried it. Most of them admitted that they hadn't bothered. Those that had made an attempt reported that all they could catch was weeds.

My reply was, "Why didn't you get the heck out of the weeds?"

It took quite a few years, and a great number of eye-opening luncheon catches from their waters, to show them that Spoonplugging WAS the answer to fishing their natural lakes, even with weeds.

For a number of years I have pointed out to the shoreline fisherman and the dyed-in-the-wool weed caster, that the day would come when they would be forced to leave the shorelines and weeds in many of the natural lakes, whether they wanted to or not. Since many of the lakes are completely ringed with vacation homes and fishing piers, the waters so full of vacationers and joy-riders that unless drastic changes were forthcoming, they could even be forced from the lake completely, as far as fishing was concerned.

Unfortunately, this situation has come to pass in too many areas where natural lakes are the predominant fishing waters. It is for this reason that I stress the importance of reservoirs. For the foreseeable future, reservoirs (man-made lakes) will be the fishing waters for this country. If you have done most of your fishing in the smaller natural lakes, you will find it tough sledding when faced with huge impoundments. Just looking out across that large expanse of water will give you the shakes. Your first reaction will be, "Where in the heck do I start?"

In recent years, many reservoirs have been built where huge areas of trees were left standing, and these trees were practically covered, by the rising water. Just facing a reservoir covered with trees presents a formidable problem. It brings to mind the old adage, "You can't see the forest for the trees."

I recall vividly the first time I took Mama (my Good Wife) fishing in a reservoir where the trees had been left standing. We were fishing the trees and forest areas in South Carolina's Lake Marion, in the Santee-Cooper complex. I refer to it as a complex due to the fact that this large body of water is made up of two reservoirs. One is Lake Marion, the so-called upper reservoir built on the Santee River, and the lower Lake Moultrie located on the Cooper River. The two bodies of water are joined by a large man-made canal. The water flows from Lake Marion through the canal to Lake Moultrie. When the reservoirs were built most of the lower lake was cleared of trees, but in Lake Marion, large forest areas were left standing and subsequently flooded.

Santee-Cooper has long been renowned, not only for black bass fishing, but for the land-locked salt water stripers which it contains. The thought of catching some luncheon fish, however, was not uppermost in Mama's mind as we fished the tree areas many years ago.

Her constant complaint was, "Dern it, I've got a dang

hang again!" or, "For heaven's sake, can't we get out of these trees?" and, "Why are we beating our brains out blind casting. We know so little about this reservoir, and with the present weather we should be trawling to locate some fish instead of playing snag-and-peek among the trees."

I tried to explain to her that in many instances the trees were standing on good structure and, regardless of the trees, the fish still used the structure for basic movements and migrations. Also, the trees themselves served as breaks for the fish to pause or stop at — and, in turn, the fisherman could see these breaks, so here the fisherman and the fish could come together.

A Good Wife doesn't always accept fishing facts. Her comment was, "Let's get out of these dang trees, or you can take me home."

It just so happened that this reservoir was typical of most where many trees were left standing, we COULD get out of the trees quite easily. We got out of the trees and shortly after were in a group of luncheon fish where we both had one coming at the same time. "I told you so", she remarked, "And don't you ever take me back into another blind jungle again."

I haven't.
I later had to admit to her that in most cases, the best structure and most productive water is in those areas where you would **not** be bothered with trees.

Today, many fishermen have the same reaction as did my wife, when faced with the problem of standing trees. Please note that I said "standing trees", not brush or bushes. These are an entirely different subject.

Much has been said and written about the new reservoirs which are being built throughout the country where masses of trees were left standing. Much of it lauding the successful catches made, with much emphasis being placed on fishing in the trees. Many fine pictures have been made which show the fishermen out among the trees. As a consequence, many fishermen have flocked to these new reservoirs with great expectations, but often with less spectacular results.

In talking about reservoirs of this particular type, let us consider them in a similar light such as I faced when fishing natural lakes which contained a heavy growth of weeds. The problem is not only where to start, but is also **where not to start**. A common denominator prevails in all fishing waters which gives to each a sameness, and you

must know exactly what to do in order to arrive at productive structure and then make a decent catch. You must have an understanding of structure and the ability to put this understanding to work successfully, regardless of the water or the problem encountered.

In any new reservoir the water is very rich in food content. This condition produces very fast growing fish. A growing fish strikes, or grabs, most anything that looks like food. In this yearling stage, the fish are many in numbers, widely distributed and eager to take most anything thrown at them. Large schools of these yearling fish can be found throughout most areas of the reservoir. Thus, most any fisherman able to see and dunk a bait catches at least some yearling fish.

Some of the areas in a newly formed reservoir produce better than others, as is natural, but, as the reservoir gets older and the fish get bigger, the most productive areas become increasingly less in number. This is the time when you face quite a few problems. You have no idea where to fish, are limited to blind casting, and in most cases are limited to certain types of lures that may not give good depth or speed control. You have been so "brainwashed" with trees that you go straight to them, blundering around among them like a lost dog as far as structure and fish are concerned.

As the reservoir gets older, structure becomes all the more important as it is the key to fish movement. This same rule holds true whether fishing in or out of trees. So if you fish the forest areas, you must be able to locate the most productive areas, and the tree areas that will produce fish are located on structure.

At this time, two things stand out in my mind. First, as these reservoirs get older, less will be said and written about them, and fewer and fewer fishermen will be flocking to them. Second, now is the time to start stressing the importance of structure, and to put trees in their right perspective. If this is not done, then the time will come when truly you—as a fisherman—will find that you really "can't see the forest for the trees". In other words, now is the time to start getting you OUT OF THE TREES. In doing this, I am not saying that areas with trees do not produce. What I am saying is that the day comes in the life of any reservoir when it gets some age and the fish get "set" in their ways. The bonanza is over for those who could not see the "reservoir for the trees". And now, instead of telling you to get the heck out of the weeds, I am now going to say, "Get the heck

out of the trees."

When thinking about reservoirs where trees were left standing, I put them in three categories.

(1) Those COMPLETELY covered with trees and vegetation.

(2) Those where areas were cleared of trees except in the upper shallower-end areas, or in coves, bays, or feeder streams.

(3) Those where the major portions are covered with exposed standing trees, but do contain some clear areas.

To clarify these somewhat, a little more detail may be in order.

When thinking about No. 1, where the lakes or reservoirs are COMPLETELY covered with trees, I put little emphasis on these, as they are usually shallow and the total area covered with water is small. These should be put more into the category of a pond. They are usually found in flat, swampy areas and cannot be classified as a major source of fishing water.

In this type of water, you would have to follow the old stream bed to locate any appreciable structure or water depths. In some, you will not find any indication of a channel or deeper water. In this case, it would be necessary to move back into the growth and observe the shoreline. There may be times when the shallow shoreline is difficult to reach, but most of the time enough can be seen so that any extrusion or other features of the shoreline would indicate structure.

In category No. 2 you will find many large reservoirs, which are major sources of fishing water. As stated, the major portion of the reservoir has been cleared. Only the upper shallower areas, coves, feeder streams, etc., have standing trees.

In most instances, the area with trees should not be considered as the major area to fish. If you have knowledge of the seasonal migration and movements of fish, you are aware that you would use these areas for short periods during the season. These periods being during the colder and earlier parts of the season. These areas are "off" season; and, for all practical purposes are of less importance as fishing water when viewed in the light of the rest of the reservoir.

Category No. 3 is the (major) reservoir for our discussion. A number of these have been built over the country during the past years. This type is usually built in rather flat country, and should be classified more as a Flatland Reservoir, rather than a Lowland or a Highland type.

These reservoirs, and the subsequent lake, covers a large acreage of flat or semi-flat country. In most instances, the overall depth is not great and many large flat areas exist which are completely covered with exposed standing trees.

At first glance, it appears that the whole dang lake is covered with trees, and, if you are not in the frame of mind to cope with trees or do not know how to go about fishing them. It would appear that this is a body of water that should be passed up.

But, if you will take a closer look at the whole reservoir, then you begin to see that you CAN get out of the trees. AND, a still closer observation will show that better structure and good fishing can be found in the cleared areas, more so than in the areas completely covered with trees. One look out across that dense growth of trees can show just how flat and void of structure the area is. You may not see a single indication that a ridge or any other type of structure exists. It appears that all of the trees are standing on a great big solid flat. Your observation may not be far wrong, as in most cases this is absolutely true.

I prefer to think of reservoirs, where standing trees are present, as having (3) main areas where productive structure is located, and where any type of lures or bait can be presented in any desired manner. AND these areas are free of trees.

- (1) Former farming lands
- (2) River and feeder stream channels
- (3) Man-made structures

In the case of former farming lands, you should take the time to drive around the impoundment to see where any former cleared lands existed. This will not only show you areas where trees are lacking, but will show the potential structure in the area. This journey will also give one of the most important observations that you can make, and that observation is the COLOR of the water that is present in the different parts of the reservoir. In the final analysis, fishing the best available water color could be the control as to whether or not fish are caught on that particular fishing trip.

Working the former farming lands, both casting and trolling, would present no problem. Finding good productive structure could also be done easily, if available.

The importance of the old river or feeder stream channels (No. 2), cannot be stressed too much. They represent the deepest water in the reservoir and, in most all of the reservoirs of this type and nature, these channels ARE THE HOME OF THE FISH. There will be very few instances

where the deep water sanctuary is outside of these channels. As stated previously, reservoirs that appear to be covered with standing trees are relatively shallow impoundments which are located in flatlands, and the only deep water in the entire lake will be found in the old stream channels.

The breaklines, breaks, structures and trees that will produce fish are found along the edges, or near edges of these channels. Note that this includes the tree areas that will be productive.

In No. 3, man-made structures produce some of the better structures found in reservoirs. These structures are usually very easily observed and located, and are usually cleaner of brush and debris than any other areas to be found. Presenting lures on man-made structures, both casting and trolling, normally requires less skill and presents fewer problems than on natural structures.

Man-made structures would be listed as:

- (1) Old submerged roadbeds.
- (2) Causeways, or roads, that were constructed across certain portions of the reservoir during construction.
- (3) The dam area.
- (4) Power lines or boat trails.

It is surprising how the old roadbeds (1) in the immediate area of the newly formed reservoirs were constructed on good structure. Long sloping bars and ridges that led out to the channel of the gullies, creeks, or rivers were used since this was the easiest approach to crossing these areas. Then when the area was flooded, these old roadbeds became ideal structure and migration routes for the fish to use. They produced visible structure and breaks from the deepest water to the shallowest. Some of my fondest memories are those of fine catches made while trolling a clanking lure up or down one of these old roadbeds. Some of the hard roadbeds give walking lures a lot of abuse, but this is much better than staying continually hung up and losing lures in a tangle of trees or brush.

When trolling these areas, there is no doubt as to whether or not your lures are in position. All that is necessary is to make straight line runs, covering all sections. It is hardly possible to cast the wrong areas when casting on old roadbeds, provided you cast all sections and work all depth with different retrieve speeds. Efforts, both casting and trolling, should be concentrated where the roadbed crosses any channel. The fish movement originates here and most of the time the migration will not reach far from the channel.

- (2) The causeways and roads that cross portions of the

reservoir are too often overlooked. You will find in many instances that entrance to the dock facilities is located adjacent to an existing causeway or road, and often these are passed up as you zoom across the water headed for the trees. Not only will the adjacent areas of the causeway be clear of trees, due to construction procedures, but the structure and riprap may be the most productive fishing spot in the whole lake. Normally, these causeways will have a bridge at some point, and usually the bridge spans the old river channel. There are cases where the bridge portion does not cross the old channel, but it crosses a man-made or a dug channel, and the surrounding water will be the deepest in the area. These causeways give structure immediately from the deepest water in the area to the shallows. The causeway and its riprap gives a clear route for migration.

I normally look at a road map before arriving at the reservoir to see if a service road (causeway) crosses the reservoir at any place, and the longer it is, the better. If one exists, this is normally the area I head for. Working the causeway and riprap is one sure way to be assured of good structure — structure that is clean and workable. Many times I do not have to go to any other area to get fish. There have been times when other areas would not produce, and I would ride quite a distance to locate a causeway, and fish. These are also excellent areas to escape from heavy wind and wave action; in fact, at times these are the only areas that can be fished if extremely high winds prevail.

To fish these causeways trolling, each size lure is "jammed" right up against the rocks, with each one walked or skipped along the top of the rocks, or whatever material was used in construction. You will soon find that a certain section, or sections (depending upon the length of the riprap) will be more productive. This is due to a bottom condition being created during construction that made that particular area a little different from the surrounding area, causing the fish to move up to or on these particular spots.

When casting the sides of a causeway, I prefer to locate the boat very close to shore so that I can make the casts up and down the shoreline. In this way, all depths can be checked thoroughly, and the lures held in position for the total length of the retrieve. The boat can be moved along the shoreline with little effort, and if there is a slight wind blowing, the boat will move satisfactorily by itself with little work on the part of the caster. The boat may bump the sides of the riprap once in a while, but, so what. About the only time I position the boat out from the shallows, and make the cast in toward

the shoreline, is when I have a group of fish located in the shallows.

No. (3), the dam area. Normally, in reservoirs that contain large areas of standing trees, you can just about assume that the area where the dam is located will be quite a wide area since a long dam is usually constructed. This means that, due to the construction process, this area was cleared of trees, making quite a large area with clean structure available. The dam area will have the deepest water in the lake, and in general will contain older and larger fish.

If at all possible, I try to drive into the dam area and look at the size of the dam, the type of construction used and determine the color of the water. Sometimes, the best water color will be located in the dam area, as well as the cleanest and most productive structures. In very few instances have I found these clean areas not workable, and this was in those isolated instances when moss on the bottom, due to pollution, made presentation of lures difficult. The clean structures found in the dam area allows presentation of lures to be made both casting and trolling with a minimum of trouble. The long dams provide good riprap fishing, the old ramps, borrow pits, etc., provide some of the best structure to be found. And, as is often the case in flatlands, when the wind is a problem the dams can serve as sheltered areas when the need arises.

No. (4), power lines and boat trails. Although, these could not rightly be called structure, they are listed here as they provide areas clear of standing trees and will at times contain or cross productive water. Too often, though, these trails are cut through trees which are located on large flat areas, void of any deep water or structure, and you end up fishing in the trees or the edges of the trees where there are no fish. It's too bad that these trails were not cut to productive structure, and the areas marked in some way to show where fish could be caught. These trails could then serve as great aids. But if you use these trails only in the light of expecting to stumble upon a productive spot, then your chances are very unlikely and these trails will serve no useful purpose. In this case, it would be better if no trails were cut at all. If you gotta fish them, work the areas where they cross a channel of some description.

To emphasize some of the points brought out, note Figure 65 and comments.

Note that the drawing is a top view of a typical flatland reservoir in which masses of trees were left standing

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In observing the depths on the sketch, they indicate a typical depth situation for a reservoir of this type. While these depths can vary in different reservoirs, the depths among the trees is relatively shallow, very seldom exceeding 15-20 feet. The depths in the trees could be greater or less, and the depths in the channels could vary accordingly. But, in most cases these depths are about what should be expected in reservoirs of this nature.

The normal main stream channel winds and turns as it crosses the reservoir. The overall depth of the channel will not vary a great deal from one section to that of another. The best structure on the channel will exist at all "turns" and where the feeder stream channel enters the main channel. You should check these areas thoroughly.

FIGURE 65



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The deepest water in the channel is found on the turns, and the portion of this structure that normally produces best will be found on the "outside" of the turn. However, in the overall picture, the structure that will be the most productive spot along the channel is the structure that is adjacent to where the side feeder stream enters the main channel. At times some of these may have a "delta" condition.

Note the areas where the boat trails were cut through the standing trees. This is typical of most reservoirs. The trails go out across the large flats with no regard to structure or to the most productive spots along the channel. In most reservoirs these tree areas have an overall depth that is normally under 15 feet, and, in many cases, much less.

Often, where a sizeable pond or lake has been submerged, the trails will lead to these areas. At other times they will not. You should be aware of any deep water pond or slough that may be located back among the trees, as they often contain fish.

The two areas that should get a lot of attention are the causeways and the area adjacent to the dam. These areas have clean workable structure. The dam area, especially, requires a lot of attention. The deepest water in the lake occurs here, the structure is normally better and more varied, and it would be in this particular area that clumps of standing trees may be observed. In most instances, these clumps of trees represent a hump or some break in the structure, the meandering of channels, and so on.

Most of the reservoirs built today have a map of some nature available. Sometimes these maps may be purchased at the dock facilities or at an area sporting goods dealer. Many of the maps show great detail. Some are in color with all of the tree areas, channels, boat trails, causeways, cleared areas and water depths all clearly marked. It is always wise to purchase one of these maps if they are available, and they should be carefully studied before going on the lake.

My closing comment is to take with a grain of salt any suggestions from those around the boat dock who tell you to take off back into the trees if you want to catch fish. In most cases, it's a bum steer, as far as locating the most productive structure in the reservoir. Just keep in mind that you can do a lot better by "getting the heck out of the trees!"

* * * * *

When I classify reservoirs, I put them into several groups; 1 - Highland, 2 - Lowland, 3 - Flatland. I go further

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and break these groups down into several types. The major differences between these groups and types is water color, depths, bottom conditions, structure — where it is likely to be, its features, and how best to work, etc.

In the material thus far, and in these "Fishing Situations" I have not covered all these groups and types, BUT, I have tried to condense them down into Typical Structure, and Typical Situations and Conditions found in all of them. In choosing the Typical Situations, I have used those I consider of more importance at this time, and to drive home as many Basic Facts as possible. If you "get" the Basic Facts in these illustrations, you need have no fear of having trouble in ANY of the others.

I have always felt, that more people have more trouble with "Flatland" reservoirs, than any other type. I also feel that these type conditions, will teach more, than any other.

Figure 65 (Get the Heck Out of The Trees) is a typical Flatland Reservoir. To make sure you have gotten the points I was trying to make, and also to convert this reservoir into one more likely to be fished by the most people, I am going to change it slightly, and proceed from another direction.

A "Flatland" reservoir is exactly what it says — it was built in Flatlands. Not in a hilly country, nor in the mountains. The reservoir has rather definite features and conditions.

- 1 - A long Dam.
- 2 - Short shallow structure along shorelines.
- 3 - Wide flats.
- 4 - A channel winding through the flats.
- 5 - Very little deep water outside the channel.

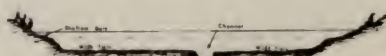


FIGURE 65-A

Figure 65-A is a side view or a cross-section of a typical Flatland reservoir. When observing this figure you might be inclined to say I am repeating myself, and that I used this when I was talking about the "Delta" situation. If you will observe closely, there are no humps or ridges along the edge of the channel. The big flats go right on out and drop into the channel.

The Flats can be very wide at times, and as you go out across them, they appear to be as flat as the top of a table. The widths of the flats can vary, as the stream channel winds around as it moves through the flat.

The relatively short shallow structure along the shorelines, are normally in the form of "bars" as shown.

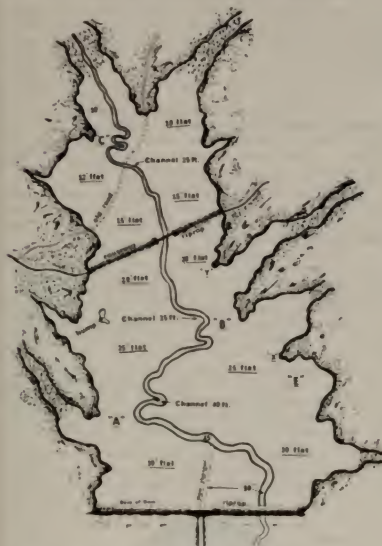


FIGURE 65-B

Figure 65-B is a top view of a typical Flatland Reservoir. Note carefully what we have — the wide dam, the huge flats (note depths carefully), and the winding channel up through the flats (note depth). You should see that this condition exists over the whole reservoir, the only change being in the depths. A reservoir of this type can be quite large. It can be several miles wide, and a dozen miles long.

You note that I do not show any structure or depths along the shorelines, neither do I show any feeder stream channels that might cut through the flat and join the main channel. But, I have added several features, that are likely to be present in a reservoir of this type, and which will play an important part in your being able to fish it successfully.

I have added a road crossing the lake (causeway), an old roadbed (submerged), structure at the Dam, and I have marked particular areas. I hope you have already seen, that all bottoms were "clear cut" (trees removed), with the exception of the upper shallow sections, and back in the shallow sections of coves (feeder streams).

When you arrive at this big "Flatlander", you see the same thing as you did in Figure 30 (refer to it). The question immediately arises — "Where will I fish?" or "Where and what is productive structure?"

The first thing you should do is try and find a Map of the reservoir showing as much detail as possible. Today, most reservoirs have some type map available for the fisherman. Usually it can be obtained at the Dock or Marina.

When you look at your map, you find that it looks practically like Figure 65-B. It may have some differences, but for all practical purposes Figure 65-B is your fishing situation.

The first thing you note are the depths involved. A quick glance tells you, THE HOME OF THE FISH IS THE CHANNEL. You can't escape this fact. To think otherwise results in failure. This is especially true as the lake gets older, and when weather and water conditions are not ideal.

When the fish are in their deep water sanctuary (the channel), they are quite dormant — non-chasing, etc. They are extremely hard to locate and make "take". Usually there is no indication of structure in the channel that would tell you where to present lures. This being the case, you are not likely to present your lures correctly by just going in there and wandering around.

Therefore, you are faced with the fact you are not likely to make contact with the fish until the movement period

occurs and the fish migrate toward shallower water.

Here is where the rub comes in a Flatland reservoir. How do the fish move? What are the migration routes? What shoreline structures produce? Which will be good? Which bad? In other words, where do I fish?

When looking for productive structure and migration routes in a Flatland reservoir, I break them down into two groups. 1 - Man-made, 2 - Natural.

I look first for the man-made structures, for they are the ones most likely to "go all the way". That is, these are the ones that will give the fish a visible route across the flats. They are:

- 1 - The Dam
- 2 - Causeway (a road crossing the lake)
- 3 - Old roadbeds covered when the area was flooded.

The natural structures, or possible migration routes, would consist of:

- 1 - Humps
- 2 - Bars or ridges that extend out from the shorelines.
- 3 - Side feeder stream channels
- 4 - Breaklines along the edges of the channels

With Figure 65-B in view let's look at the possibilities. I will start with the man-made.

1 - Dam: I have already pointed out that the dam area must not be overlooked when fishing a reservoir of this type. This area contains the deepest water in the lake. It has good structure, which is clean and workable due to construction activities. I have pointed out the importance of "trolling" the riprap (with the different lures "stacked" with each size skipping along the tops of the rocks). Etc.

In Figure 65-B I have noted several things that you should be aware of that can exist in the Dam area. Often, the Spillway or the "Outlet" will not always be at, or in, the old river channel. Often it will be built to one side, and a new channel cut. When this occurs, it increases greatly the potential of the area. It produces more deep water, and more structure. At the same time, it provides a perfect condition for the fish to have access to the riprap. The old channel comes right up to the base of the Dam.



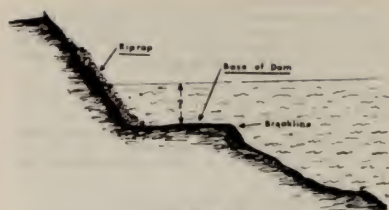


FIGURE 65-C

Figure 65-C shows a cross section of the Dam. The thing to note here is the **Base of the Dam**. When constructing a "Dirt Filled" Dam, often a wide base (or foundation) must be made upon which to build the upper portions of the Dam. It creates a situation such as shown in Figure 65-C. The importance of your being aware of this condition, is due to the Depths, Breaks, and Breaklines that may be present.

You should see, if there is no depth of water on this base, or if there are no "breaks" along the breakline, or on the flat base, there is likely to be no migration of the fish to the riprap.

In a Flatland Reservoir such as this, the water level, can play a very important part in the movements of the fish. Often just a few feet will make all the difference in the world. In the case of Figure 65-C, if there is no deep water (more than 8-10 feet) on top of this base, and there is no "cut" or wash through the flat base leading to deep water, it is not likely there will be any fish along the riprap. In this case, you move to the edge of the Base, and work along the breakline. Trolling is the best way to check it.

2. Causeway. I believe I have already expressed my thinking about the importance of working the riprap along any road that might cross the lake. These are perfect structures in Flatland reservoirs. In the case of Figure 65-B, this particular causeway will be productive (when the fish move). This is due to the flats and the depths involved. The lower side (toward Dam) will be more productive than the upper side. With water only fifteen (15) feet deep (the flats) on the upper side, and since most of the causeway is a long distance

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from the channel, movements of the fish will be confined primarily to the riprap adjacent to where the road crosses the main channel. On the lower side, with the depths involved (20 feet), there could be movements, at times, to all sections of the riprap. But, during bad weather conditions it could also be confined to the area where the road crosses the main channel. Trolling the riprap with lures tipping the rocks, will show you if movement of the fish is in progress and just where, and how they use the causeway.

3. Old submerged roadbeds. Any submerged roadbeds give the fish a visible route across the flats toward shallower water. In our case (Figure 65-B) the only submerged road we have is in the upper end where the water on the flats is only 10-12 feet deep. This means, that the movements of the fish will be confined primarily to the area where the road crosses the channel. At times under good weather conditions, and at certain periods of the year, there can be migrations up along this road for quite some distance. This is easily checked out, but most of the time, you would concentrate your efforts at the channel.

Now let us look at the Natural Structure found in this reservoir, that will receive migration of the fish.

1. Humps. In many Flatland Reservoirs, there will be no humps or underwater island available. In Figure 65-B I have placed one (1). From the map it appears it is located on a flat, a long distance from the channel, with no visible "breaks" that might lead the fish. There is no indication that a feeder stream channel is in the area. In the early life of the reservoir, there might have been yearling fish around this hump, and there might be a remote possibility that "breaks" in the form of bushes or brush might lead the fish across the flats to the hump, but, in this case, it is too far from the channel. The flats are too wide. I might go look at it, but I'd spend no time there.

2. Bars or ridges that extend out from the shorelines. These are the more important natural structures to consider. In discussing them, and when viewing our map for shoreline structures, we will have to look at them in terms of our number 3 item — **feeder stream channels.** These channels with their breaklines, will be a major factor in guiding the fish across the flats to a structure along the shoreline. We will also have to look at them in terms of the edges of the channels — our number 4 natural structure listed.

When looking at a map of a Flatland Reservoir and

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trying to determine what Natural structure might be good, the first thing I look for are the areas where the channel comes in close to the shoreline. In figure 65-B there are three areas where this occurs — "A", "B", and "C".

In observing these areas, I look to see if there are any feeder streams, or feeder stream channels in the near area. In this case, both "A" and "B" have them. "C" is located in the upper shallower area, so I'm not too concerned whether any side channels exist.

The next thing I look for is any unusual twisting or turning of the channel. This is an indication that something, or some different bottom condition exists. It could indicate structure. In looking at Figure 65-B there are three areas where this occurs. Here again it is at "A", "B", and "C". It is uncanny how these three conditions will exist in the same area. That is, a- where the channel swings in close to shore, b- the presence of feeder streams, c- the main channel has some unusual twist or turn.

After I get on the water, I try to locate the **SHALLOWEST running "point" or "bar", that runs the FARTHEST into the lake.** The narrower this point and bar, the better I like it. At times my map may show the depths, and I can locate them BEFORE I go on the water. In the case of our map (Figure 65-B) the depths are not shown. BUT, it does show the most likely places where this type structure may exist. AND, here again, they appear to be at "A", "B", and "C". In looking at section "E", it would appear any structure in this area, would not be good. There is no indication of good structure in the light of the above. I would certainly take a look at the point "X", for our map indicates there is a feeder stream channel on the upper side, and the shoreline indicates a "point". Probably a pretty good "bar" exists, but if the fish moved to it, the "contact" point would be at some point on the upstream side of the bar. I would check it out.

Of course our Main points of interest would be Areas "A", and "B". Area "C" is shallow, and the place to work would be the breaklines along the channel.

When working area "B", I would certainly spend time on the point marked "Y". There is deep water on two sides, and the structure most likely would be long, and extend quite some distance toward the main channel.

Earlier I stated that it was uncanny how all the features to look for, seemed to congregate in particular areas? Actually it isn't any mystery, these things come together naturally, each is related to the other. In times past, the flow of the main channel was interfered with, or affected by

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the flow of the side feeder stream. This in turn, caused the unusual bending of the main channel. These actions, also built up the "point," and the long underwater bar extending out toward the main channel. If the side feeder stream didn't exist, the area "B" wouldn't even exist. The shoreline would probably be as far away from the main channel as section "E", and the main channel would not have any unusual bends.

Now let us assume that we found a structure, or a bar, at "B". We would most likely find that it does not "go all the way" to the channel. There still exists a 20-25 foot flat between the end, and the channel. But due to the fact the side feeder stream channel shows the way to the structure, and the fact that the end of the bar isn't too far away, and the likelihood there will be "breaks" on the flat to show the way (in the form of bushes most of the time), the structure should produce. To help clarify this better let us look at a couple more Figures. I might add, that in a Flatland reservoir, your productive "bars" will be viewed the same way regardless where they may exist. The depth of the flat may vary, but the features of the structure (bar in this case) will be the same.



FIGURE 65-D

FIGURE 65-E

Figures 65-D and 65-E are two cross sections, or side views, of a "bar" (structure) that runs out from the shoreline in a Flatland reservoir. In this case the flat has a depth of 20 feet. Figure 65-D has a breakline that breaks at 12 feet to the flat. Figure 65-E has a 9 foot breakline that breaks to the flat. One can be productive, and the other will not. There are two main differences between these two bars.

The first thing to examine is the depth of the break. As is often the case in a Flatland reservoir, the bars along the shoreline will break off rather shallow. This creates problems for the unknowledgeable fishermen. As stated earlier, just a few feet difference in water level can play havoc with a productive structure. You must keep in mind that 8-10 feet is the separation point of the shallow water from the deep water. Fish are very reluctant to pass this

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depth. Many times a fisherman is having success on a bar where it breaks at 11 feet. Then the water drops a couple feet, and he can't understand why he no longer catches many good fish. **The breakline (or break) becomes too shallow to receive the bulk of the moving fish.**

When interpreting a structure (bar) in a Flatland Reservoir Figures 65-D and 65-E shows a **very important feature**. That being, when the breakline occurs, it **must break all the way to the depth of the flat**. The distance from the breakline to the area where it is as deep as the flat, must not be very great. It cannot break a foot or so, and then slowly get deeper and deeper. OR, you can't expect a bar to produce if it just gets deeper and deeper over a long distance until it reaches the flat. (For a bar such as this, to produce, it would have to be very narrow and ridge-like, and this is not likely to occur in a Flatland Reservoir.)

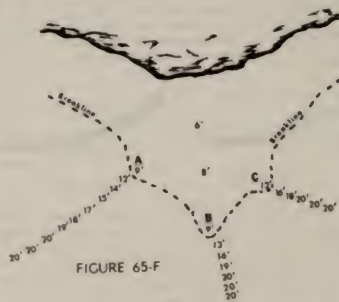


Figure 65-F is a top view of a long shallow running structure off a point such as "A" and "B" in Figure 65-B. It is quite big, and has "fingers" at different spots. A typical situation. A breakline is shown running around the greater structure. Let's interpret it.

Finger "A" breaks at nine (9) feet, but it does not break fast or very far. The area off this finger slopes off

gradually, until it reaches the Flat depth of 20 feet. Doesn't look very good.

Finger "B" also breaks at nine (9) feet. It breaks very good, and drops to the flat depth in short order. This finger has possibilities.

Finger "C" breaks at 12 feet, and drops to Flat depth quickly also.

On good weather and water conditions, both "B" and "C" should produce. BUT, in the overall picture Finger "C" would be the "contact point" of the mass of the fish. Finger "B" has too shallow a break, and when weather and water conditions are not good, it may not get any fish — while "C" would. In any case, when movement does not come up to the breakline, you would concentrate your efforts off (deeper) these two fingers.

A major reason why the structures must have the feature of the break dropping quickly to the flat depth, is the fact, **the FLAT may have water deep enough to hold the fish BEFORE migration**. In other words, although the Channel in this case is the "home" of the fish, the depth is such (20 to 30 ft.), that under **extremely** good weather and water conditions the fish may not go all the way back to the channel after the movement period, but settle down somewhere on the flat. As you can see, if this occurs, the structure (or bars) "go all the way" and readily available and visible for the movements of the fish.

Above the causeway, this will not happen, as the depth on the flat is too shallow. Each migration in this area would begin at the channel.

By no means take my statement about the fish "settling down" on the flats, as meaning this is the "home" of the fish. The "home" is the channel, and any bad weather condition, such as a cold front, can cause them to scoot back to the channel, and it may be a week before they get back to the structure (bar).

This return to the channel is the reason the Man-made structures in a Flatland Reservoir are so important. **They reach the deep water.** You could be catching fish for days on the man-made structures before the first fish showed up on the natural ones. (bars)

This brings us to the 4th item listed in the Natural structures or areas to find fish. These are the **edges, or breaklines found along the channels**. These are very important for those times when weather and water conditions are not far good migration. **AND, this will occur a great deal of the time throughout the year.**

In the section above the causeway (and probably in all feeder streams) the water on the flats is not very deep and the troller can work these breaklines (edge of channel) without too much trouble. When casting the breaklines he may be confined to a "jump type" lure, but this should produce the fish once they have been located — which is easier done by trolling.

Major effort would be made where the old road crosses the channel, and where any side feeder stream or wash has cut into the main channel. Any time that two major streams come together in this upper area, you would thoroughly check where they join.

Below the causeway, where the edge of the channel is quite deep, the troller should go to "wire" line to reach all the breaklines. The coster would have a pretty hard time doing a good job of finding the fish. Once they are found (by trolling the wire), then casting can be tried. Here again, concentrated effort would be made where side feeder stream channels enter the main channel.

Probably when you were looking at Figure 65-B, you kept looking at those standing trees up in the upper end, and in the coves. I suppose you kept looking for me to get around to them, and couldn't quite understand why I did not bring them in when listing the potential areas. This was no oversight. There might be some fish in these areas at certain periods of the year — such as late fall or early spring, but in the overall picture of the Reservoir, these areas would not attract much of my attention. They are not worth the time or the effort. There are too many other places that produce good fish, there is no guessing about it.

This Fishing Situation on the Flatland Reservoir, has taken up a lot of space. It probably created hard reading, due to continued reference to Figure 65-B. The reason I went into great detail on all the possibilities — it gave me a chance to drive home again the basic facts concerning fish behavior, and what part structure plays in your search for fish. My suggestion would be for you to study this material several times. I feel sure, each time you will find a Fishing Fact you had missed.

* * * * *

As stated before, this type and style of book, does not allow too much detail to be said on any subject and especially here in Fishing Situations. But, probably this section would not be complete, without some remarks on "Farm Ponds".

Any problems encountered in farm ponds is due to several things; but all, a result of the features normally associated with these small bodies of water — primarily depth.

I have already discussed some of them (Figure 55) under this section; so I will not make further comment on those covered with weeds, or those where the weeds go deep.

In farm ponds, as in other waters, you must keep in mind that the **deepest** water is the home of the fish. The fish HERE, are likely to become MORE dormant under certain weather and water conditions, than in lakes where greater depths will help offset the ill effects.

Many of these type ponds, are not suitable for good reproduction of bass. They are most always overloaded with small pan fish, and some get so loaded, there will be NO reproduction of the larger fish.

If the pond contains larger bass, and difficulty is had in catching them, it is due to **improper depth and speed control**. **These are the only controls available to you.** Many fishermen will catch fish with a particular lure — when they are "biting" or during the early spring spawning period. They continue to use this style lure all season, whether it will give the necessary Depth and Speed control or not.

Due to the forage fish available to these fish, you better always figure you have to make them "Strike". This means, you have to check your speeds at all depths — **free running or walking**.

One of the more often remarks I hear — "I'll try to catch fish out of the pond, but I fail most of the time. Now, take Grandpaw for instance, he can really catch them."

This should give you the 'key'. By this time you should be well aware of the fact that fish do not move constantly nor consistently. Probably, you decide to go down to the pond to fish for a spell. As is in most cases you don't have much time, especially if the fish aren't biting.

Ole Grandpaw, most likely spends the **whole day** at the pond.

I have built several farm ponds in my life. I always found it advisable to place a nice 'break' in the deepest water — one that I could reach on the cast. The material used was such that I could **bang** my walking lure against it without hanging up. This normally solved any problems of "finicky" bass.



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MAPPING AND INTERPRETATION

If I were to place the importance of knowledge on any one given area, the highest degree of importance would probably have to be placed on your ability to read and interpret bottom conditions.

Success on any given fishing trip will be determined by how well you understand how fish move on structure, the effects of water conditions, weather conditions, and how well you can evaluate these conditions at the time you're on the water.

The degree of understanding that you have will determine how and when you arrive at the fish. Your interpretation of structure, and of conditions affecting fish at the time, will direct you into the procedures necessary to put fish on the stringer. The approach to catching fish will not always be exactly the same, so you must react to the conditions which you face at that particular time.

All good Spoonpluggers take ample time to evaluate the water to be fished. This means BEFORE and AFTER he gets on the water. For example:

- Is this a steep canyon lake, heavy with timber, rock, etc.?
- Is it a natural lake? Man made lake?
- Was this farm land? Was it all timberland? Is it part farm land, part timberland?
- Are there any well established feeders, or dry gullies, which lead into the lake? What kind of terrain did they come out of?
- Etc.

Additional information, which would be useful, can be obtained by asking a few questions of the local people, such as:

- Where does the main river go through the lake?
- Is there a secondary river, or big streams, joining the main river?
- Where do you catch fish when 'they're biting'.
- (This quickly gives the near area of productive structure).
- Etc.

Total interpretation of structures, weather and water conditions, to arrive at the fish, will not come overnight. Each trip will be an improvement over the previous trip. Once mastered, you can concentrate your efforts in key areas. There will be less water to work, and less time will be needed to check the water. One hundred per cent of the time will be spent in working productive water, which will

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keep you on top of the fish. You will be the first to become aware of any fish activity and migration. Not only that, but you will be in a position to take advantage of any activity.

In the final analysis your mapping and interpretation ability will decide your future as a fisherman. This is the major area where you can always get better.

BEFORE YOU GET ON THE WATER

Interpretation of the fishing potential of a smaller body of water, be it natural or artificial, is not too difficult to the average Spoonplugger. It is when he comes to a BIG body of water that the men are separated from the boys. A NATURAL lake, in most instances, does not present too big a problem for the "knowledgeable" fisherman. It is the big ARTIFICIAL reservoirs that gives him trouble.

Most fishermen just can't wait to get on the water when fishing a strange lake. Most likely the lake was reported to be a "real fishing hole"; anticipation is at a high pitch, so he hurries to get "fishing". Hurrying to get on the water can be a great error, and later when he begins to wonder if there are any fish in the water, he is puzzled as to why his catch is zero.

Taking a little time to drive around a lake or reservoir; observing the water conditions, the terrain, and the type of bottom conditions likely to exist, is well worth your time and effort.

By this time, you should be well aware that there are good conditions and bad conditions for the fish, and your ability to fish for them in the best manner. Then it should be obvious that you had better do everything in your power to look the situation over and see if you cannot eliminate some of the water, and come to a conclusion that conditions appear best in this area or that area for you to do your fishing. You must stop doing your fishing by wild guesses, but instead, go about it in a sound intelligent manner. And if you do this, you should have the battle at least half won.

You might say, "Yeh, but the dang thing is so big, and there is so much water out there. Just where do we begin to make our study?"

Let's break down your pre-fishing studies into three (3) headings — as you go around the lake asking questions and observing.

- 1-Water Color.
- 2-Available structure.
- 3-Can it be fished properly?

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In studying water color, you should be aware that most of the time your main concern will be one of too much clarity. In some sections, during certain seasons of the year, you may be faced with water being too muddy and you will need to look for water with more clarity. But, most of the time you will be faced with finding an area with dingy water. Your past studies should give you clues as to what color of water you would normally expect to find in certain areas. Now your actual observation can verify or disprove your pre-diagnosis.

In studying the "lay of the land", or terrain, around a body of water, you can see the areas with potential structures. Instead of picking out a deep gorge-type water, you pick the former farm areas, or areas with obvious structures such as islands, long flat bars, flats with streams or channels running through them, or a road bed that may cross the lake, etc.

If the reservoir was formed by a dam that is quite long, then it is a sure bet that the dam area will contain structures, deep water, and riprap.

The third (3) heading above, "Can I fish it properly?", is actually an additional heading that need not be included for the "educated" fisherman. If a good job is done on the first two items, the answers will be had concerning the third.

A particular exception to this might occur when making the color selection. The preferred color could take you into an area with brush, or other features that may limit presentation. For example, you have a reservoir where the dam was built in a narrow gorge. The shorelines are steep, with little visible structure, and the bottom is covered with bushes. Normally the water is too clear for good migration — so you passed it up. But due to rain, or spring run-off, the water has become dingy, and you have decided to give it a try.

If you should pick such an area (due to water color) and run into problems of presentation of lures, you are not entirely dead, due to the fact that at the time this occurs the fish are likely to be up and moving, and fishing wouldn't necessarily have to be "right on the money". So again, the Spoonplugger would be wise to stick to his acceptable water color.

You must remember that these normally too-clear-areas, with all of their questionable bottom conditions, are not entirely void of fish. You know that fish are there. It is just a question that for most of the time there is not sufficient migration or you can't fish it well enough to make contact. If you find one of these deep-gorge areas, even with all of

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its toughness, and it has a decent water color, you had better fish it, for the fish certainly haven't been disturbed or harvested. I often keep my eyes on a situation such as this. When the water color gets right — in I go.

If you will observe the water color, and observe the structure possibilities in a given body of water, you will most likely find the "workable" areas. The relationship between them is too great to miss.

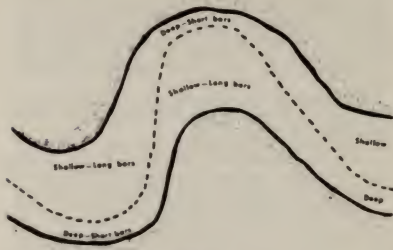


FIGURE 66

Figure 66 shows a portion of a reservoir where the channel of the original stream wound around, or where "bends" occur. Few reservoirs will be fished, where you will not find where the original stream curved in some fashion, or to some degree.

One of the most important, and most often encountered, observation and interpretation that you will face, will be in the nature of that shown in the sketch. A quick glance should tell just where the steeper banks, deeper water, and shorter bars are located, also where the flatter sections, long structures and shallower water is located.

The above information, along with additional observations of terrain — such as coves, hills, and distances — should give a fair estimate as to where and what type of structure exists in the area, before it is ever checked out.

One of the best ways to improve mapping and interpretation is to make a calculated guess as to what is present, before checking it.

AFTER YOU GET ON THE WATER



FIGURE 67-A



FIGURE 67-B

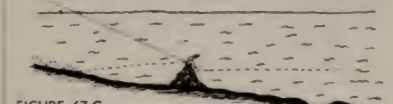


FIGURE 67-C

One of the best mapping tools that you will find, are the lures in your tackle box. Other tools, such as contour maps, depth sounders, etc., can be used to SOME DEGREE. But, in the final analysis the use of lures is the only way to get final interpretation of a structure, and that is — by catching fish.

The mapping and interpretation process will not be complete until every little detail about a structure is known. Lures, run at their proper depth, with correct gear, will tell every detail. It is important that you be rigged to carry out this important phase. It may take years to understand fully how fish use all these little details, under all weather and

water conditions. But here again, is a reason you can get better and better in your fishing.

When I designed the Spoonplugs so many years ago, the use of it in mapping and interpretation, was a major factor. This, along with its ability to control depth and speed at the same time, left no doubt in my mind as to the results I'd have in catching fish.

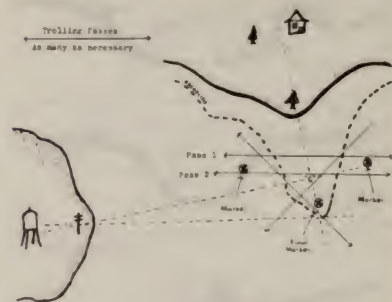


FIGURE 68

Let's map a structure (bar) in a lake, and at the same time show the use, and importance of "markers".

Usually when mapping the shallows, it is not necessary to throw out markers except when marking a weedline or brushline. The shoreline will contain objects that are close enough to give location, such as an extrusion in the shoreline, tree, house, etc., however, at times, the shallows may extend so far into the lake that markers are needed. These can be tossed out as the crown of the bar or structure is worked with the smaller lures. Note all features in the shallows.

It is when you get to the deeper sections of structure that markers become important. This is normally farther away from shore, and you need to have additional reference

points for establishing breaks, breaklines, drop-offs, or the "contact" points on structures.

Noting Figure 68. Trolling pass #1, in the deeper section, will establish that a bar exists. You drop a marker. This first marker can't be thrown back to where the lure made contact with the bar, and at this point there is no need to place it exactly where the lure came over the structure.

Trolling pass #2. As soon as the lure makes contact with the bar, you again throw a marker.

You now have the structure positioned between these two markers. A quick glance toward the shoreline will further note its position.

Subsequent trolling passes (and markers — if needed) will allow you to throw the final marker. You must establish the exact crown of the bar, and how far out it extends, all positions of features such as breaklines and drop-offs should be noted in relationship to the markers.

With these things firmly established in your mind, you now place the final marker. This final marker should be placed at the last breakline or slightly back from the breakline so it will be out of the way for subsequent trolling and casting.

Before any marker is picked up, you must be sure that you know what the structure looks like. For future reference, and to fully implant it in your mind, you should put it down in black and white — draw a map. Before picking up the final marker you must establish your sight bearings.

To establish sight bearings, note the sketch. If you line up the tree on the shoreline to a position slightly left of the house, the line of sight will fix the position of the drop-off in this direction. It also fixes the casting position "C" of the boat.

Now you must establish the position of the drop-off and the casting position from another direction. You should establish the second sight bearing as near as possible to 90 degrees (right angle) to the first sight bearing.

To select two objects to line up for a sight bearing, remember that the farther apart they are, the more accuracy you will have in your position on the structure.

On the shoreline to the west — if you line up the telegraph pole with the center of the water tank, you have a line of sight that positions the drop-off in this direction.

Where the two sight lines cross is the exact position of the drop-off.

If you move the telegraph pole until it lines up with the edge of the tank on the left side, you have a line for the

casting position.

In future fishing trips to this area, all you have to do to be in the correct trolling or casting position is to **proceed along one of these sight bearings, until the other bearing lines up.**

Most important of all in the mapping and fishing process, is for the Spoonplugger to RECORD what he finds.

The drawings and markings on your first structure map may not be complete and in correct detail. You may find that there will be slight changes to be made on every trip. These changes may be something you missed, such as a small detail or break, or it could be a depth factor. Even a slight direction and distance change will have to be made. This will call for an additional change in your trolling and casting patterns, and your shoreline sightings will possibly be altered.

A proper record of structure will not only tell you where it's located and what some of its particular features are, but most important is that in making this record you increased your knowledge about proper interpretation. This is the important factor in your fishing know-how and growth. **THIS IS THE TEACHER THAT YOU CARRY WITH YOU.**

You may ask, "Do I have to have **exact** depths, distances, and scale when preparing structure maps?"

The answer is NO.

The important thing in mapping and recording the findings, is to show **LOCATION, SHAPE AND DETAILS.** Having **exact** depths, or **exact** measurements in feet, of the different dimensions of a structure is not necessary. It is not likely you would gain any knowledge, or that it would help you to present lures correctly, if you had exact measurements.

If exact measurements are desired, there are several methods which could be used to get them; the use of contour maps prepared by engineers, depth sounders to secure depth readings, and even a tape to measure the distances.

Having everything to exact scale isn't important. In preparing your detailed structure maps, you would be using a certain section of the shoreline as a reference point. You would be using a certain object on the shoreline as a reference in determining location of the structure. With very little effort you will relate these things and a satisfactory **SCALE** will fall into place.

After all, the purpose of the map is to allow YOU to know where it is, how it is shaped, how far out in runs, how trolling passes are to be made, what size lures to use to

reach certain sections, and where to position boat for casting, etc. What do you care if your map does not give a true picture of actual measurements?

The same thing applies in your shoreline sightings for locating certain areas on structure, trolling paths, or casting positions.

You might ask, "Why am I told to keep checking the shallows, especially since I know they will not contain big fish in quantity, and particularly after I learn where the deep structures are located?"

There are two main reasons why you are advised to keep checking the shallows:

1 - Because fish are there part of the time. Even though you normally expect small fish, these fish can be 'indicators'. They can indicate the area is productive. In fishing strange waters, one of the easiest and fastest ways to find potentially productive water is to troll the shorelines. Small fish caught along the shoreline also indicates movement. Several small fish picked up in succession is indicative that movement is occurring, and that the larger fish are at a reachable depth on structure. Never assume that fish are at a particular depth, break or breakline — you could miss them, they could be at a deeper or shallower one. But by starting in the shallows and working out, there is no guesswork.

2 - In interpreting bottom features in a body of water, one of the key observations is the shoreline, and what is found in the shallows. The first 8 - 10 feet of water will tell you a lot about what to expect in the way of bottom conditions.

By working the shallows repeatedly, you begin to relate the features observed to things found below this depth, and, at the same time, relate it to fish caught. Pretty soon, just a brief observation will tell you the fishing possibilities of an area. You may get the relationship sooner than others. But, even those who are not quite so observant will, in time, subconsciously relate shoreline and shallow water features to good productive structure.

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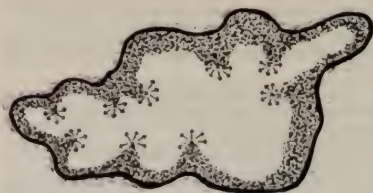


FIGURE 69

"You might say, the lake I fish has very tall weeds. The depth at the weedline is 14 feet, and the weeds come completely to the top of the water. We are not allowed to motor troll, and I have been unable to find a contour map of this lake. I also do not own a depth meter. My question is, how do I go about mapping the lake? In fact, how would I fish the structures once they are found?"

You can get the answers to both questions at the same time. Let the weedline be your guide. Locate the extrusions in the weedline, such as shown in Figure 69. Place your boat at the edge of the weeds, and 'fan cast' the area out from the point in the weeds. If any productive structure exists it should be in these areas. Note carefully the depths. **How long it takes the lure to sink, will give you the depths.** I have already discussed how to fish it correctly.

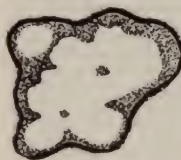


FIGURE 70-A



FIGURE 70-B

You might ask yourself, "Can a weedline tell me anything about the structure, or the bottom make-up of a particular lake?"

I have already discussed, and stated, that the weedline will tell you lots about the water color, type of bottoms present, and how it can indicate just how easy or tough the fishing will be. But, it can go further, and indicate just what **TYPE** of structure is present.

Figures 70-A and 70-B are top views of the same lake. Figure 70-A shows the **WEEDLINES** in the lake. Figure 70-B shows the interpretation of structure that I made. Probably your interpretation will be different, and in fact when the truth is known — both of us may not be right. **BUT**, neither of us would be far off, and this type interpretation will surely put us on the best spots. After all, our working of the best potential spots is important — if we expect consistent catches.

Your analysis of a weed condition in a lake, is just as important to your future **growth as a fisherman** (Knowledge), as any other phase of Spoonplugging.

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Let's say Figure 71 is a structure (bar) that you have just mapped. You have correctly, and wisely, left out all contour lines, and only show the one **breakline**. I take for granted there were no other breaklines on this structure, for if there had been, I am sure you would have put them in.

As you look at this big structure — the long crooked breakline, the 'fingers', and the many depths involved — you realize that you must now **INTERPRET** the structure.

Finger 'A' has a three foot break. The bottom off this finger is rather flat — a long, sloping bottom. It appears to be too far from the deep water. The break is rather shallow for good migration.

Finger 'B' appears closer to deep water. It has a three foot break, and it breaks deeper — at 10 feet. The bottom is rather flat, but somewhat better than finger 'A'.

Finger 'C' has a three foot break, and it occurs at a greater depth. The bottom goes off rapidly into deep water after the breakline.

Finger 'D' is not well defined. In observing the total left side of the structure there appears to be a breakline all down the side, which drops off into deep water. A channel, or deep hole, is indicated on this side of the bar. Since there is no **break SHOWN** on the breakline you would say the fish would not make contact with the side of the bar.

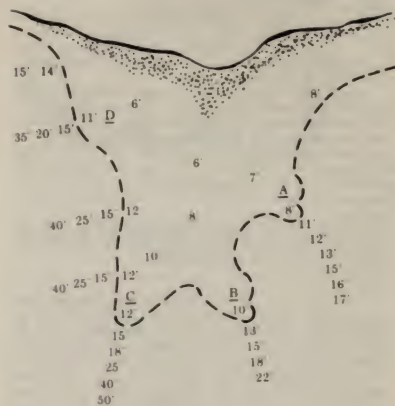


FIGURE 71

Finger "C" would be the best choice. It would provide the most likely contact point at the very tip of the finger.

From what is shown, your interpretation that Finger "C" would be the migration route of the fish, would be correct. BUT, there is one area on the greater structure that would require more study. This is the sharp breakline into deep water on the side of Finger "C".

You must use lures to fully check all the small details along this breakline. On certain weather and water conditions, the fish may use the side as a contact point to the structure. This would be especially so; from a SEASONAL point of view.

CONTOUR MAPS

Many fishermen are not aware that a contour map can provide **valuable** fishing information. To many, these maps are just a bunch of lines; to others, the lines have a little more meaning in that they show something about water depth; and, some few fishermen may occasionally check one for some specific information such as an underwater island. But, for the vast majority of fishermen these maps play no part in their fishing, or at the most a very limited part.

Contour maps are worthy of far more than a quick glance! There is a great deal to be gained from these maps, provided they are studied and **interpreted** correctly. Most bodies of water have some type of contour map available. These maps may not show the small details that are important to the fish, and to the fisherman, but they will, in most cases, show the larger picture. And from this the fisherman is able to pinpoint the areas for a more detailed study.

A contour map can be of tremendous help in eliminating most of the lake **before** you get on the water! Many lakes have good fishing areas, or productive water, in only a **fraction** of the total area of water available. So, in addition to providing useful information they can be a time-saver as well. No time need be **wasted** in areas that will **not** produce fish.

Why then are contour maps not being utilized fully by fishermen and the information they provide put to use?

I find that the average fisherman, first of all, **does not know how** to read the map correctly; and, secondly, he does not know how to **interpret** it! This fact is borne out by the large number of maps that are sent to me to be marked. This lack of knowledge is certainly understandable, for a great many do not understand fully the basic habits and movements of fish, and how the lake or reservoir bottom conditions affect him.

To show what information is available in a contour map and how this information can be used to good advantage, let's take as an example a typical map, and from it extract and digest the information it provides. But, in order for you to understand more fully how the results are arrived at, a review of basics, plus additional tips, or information, is called for.

(1) The home of fish is deep water, the deepest water in the area.

Anytime a fish is caught, it must be remembered that this fish **originated** from the deepest water in the area. This could be a deep hole in the center of the lake, or it

could be a deep channel in the area. The immediate reaction to a strike or a fish should be, "How did this fish get here? What lead him here? What route did he take in arriving at this particular spot?"

(2) Fish use bottom **STRUCTURE** to arrive at a particular spot. The most common structure that fish use is a **BAR**, a ridgelike formation that extends out from the shallows into deep water. The structure must **EXTEND ALL THE WAY TO DEEP WATER!** Fish must be able to see the route they are to take **IMMEDIATELY** upon leaving deep water, and the route must be marked by visual **SIGN POSTS** (breaks) for the movements, or migrations, from deep water to shallow, or vice versa.

(3) In order to fully "read" a contour map, there is one feature that you must be aware of, as it is of great importance in arriving at whether or not a structure is worth working, and to pinpoint to some degree, the **CONTACT POINT** (or the **NEAR** contact point) of the fish as they begin migration.

This particular feature is a **BREAKLINE**; that is, a position on structure where there is a rather **sudden increase** in depth.

Normally, in reading a map this feature is overlooked, and unless searched for and determined, you have no way of knowing which is the **BEST** structure to work, or if the structure is very large which area of it should be worked.

In fact, a practical interpretation of bottom structure is not possible without noting this feature.

If there is any question in your mind as to what exactly is a breakline, and how it relates to interpreting a contour map, go back and re-study, "**Breaks and Breaklines.**"

In studying a contour map, you may have no trouble finding the breaklines, but you may have some difficulty in determining the area, or section, **where fish first make contact with the structure, or breakline.**

Let us view a few sketches that may clear this up.

Figure 72 is a cross-sectional view of a structure with the breakline shown.

Figure 73 is a top view of the same section. Note that I have drawn in all the 5 foot contour lines. In this case, the contour lines do not run around the structure in a uniform manner, and they form a breakline at only one spot. In this case, this area could, and should, be called a "break" instead of a breakline. In most bodies of water the breakline is not located around the entire structure, but is located on only a portion or "spot" of the main structure as shown. In this instance, the breakline is more accurately referred to as a "break." Figure 73 would be described as a 10 foot "break" occurring at the 10 foot depth.

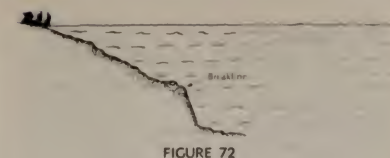


FIGURE 72

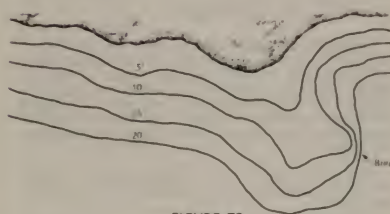


FIGURE 73

When studying an average contour map in an effort to determine: (1) where your efforts should be concentrated; (2) the worth of an area; (3) the location of the contact point, **the only clue that you will have is given by the breaklines.** The breaklines determine if these conditions are present.





FIGURE 74

When the breakline occurs at only one spot (break), such as in Figure 74, you consider **this** the contact point. However, on a LONG breakline (where no break is shown) you will have to check the breakline thoroughly to determine the contact point. In this instance, the breakline contact point would be at breaks in the form of a rock, an eroded spot, a hump, stump, weeds, bushes, sunken objects and so on.

There are three main ingredients that an average contour map gives which serve to show you the fishable spots. They are:

- (1) Deep holes or channels.
- (2) Structures, such as bars and underwater humps (islands).
- (3) Breaklines.

No contour map will show the small details on structure, such as any small projections, eroded spots, rocks, stumps, small humps, dips, logs and so on. **These are the details you must determine by actually working the area!** But, most maps will show the main features listed.

In any **interpretation** of structures shown, you should keep a few things in mind when considering depth. Do not be too deeply concerned about HOW deep the **deepest** water is. I personally prefer that the depth be at least 35 feet, and deeper if possible. In many bodies of water this much depth is not available. In this case, the deepest water whatever it is, is the home area.

You may become confused about water depth. When mention is made of the 30-35 foot depth being an important depth, you react by pointing out that your lake has 80 or 100 feet of water. I do not care how much water is **BELOW** the 30-35 foot depth. However deep your water may be, you assume that the deep water sanctuary of fish is around this 30-35 foot depth, until proven otherwise. At times, under certain weather and water conditions, the fish will be down to the bottom of that 100 foot lake. But, as conditions become more normal, the fish move back to the 30-35 foot zone. It is this position that you must visualize as the **STARTING** point of fish movement, and subsequent migration.

In observing the breaklines on contour maps, you should observe all breaklines that occur shallower than 30-35 feet (except in the case of Muskie — then you have to note those from 50-55 feet).

The 10 foot depth (Figure 73) is rather shallow, and only in exceptionally good migrations will a school of lunker fish move up to this breakline. This type of migration does not happen very often. Any breakline deeper than 10 feet becomes more important, especially those from 12-20 feet. The deeper breaklines in this range will receive more frequent migrations than those with shallower depths. But, the shallower breaklines will be more easily identified and more easily worked, as fishing will not be quite so **EXACT** as those in deeper water, and usually the fish are more active.

If it were possible to pick out an ideal breakline it would have to be around 14-17 feet (Fig 74). This range gives good depth for lunker fish migration and, more importantly, you can work it easily — both casting or trolling.

With all of these various facts in mind let us look at a sample contour map. We will approach it as if you have never seen a map before. We will observe all features and then put an interpretation on what is shown.



FIGURE 75

Figure 75 is a typical Contour Map.

The scale shows that $\frac{1}{2}$ inch equals 200 feet.

Just what does this mean, and how can it serve any purpose?

First, every $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the map represents 200 actual feet of the lake. Either by actual measurement, or by an approximate guess, the distance and size of the structures can be determined. The quantity of deep water can be determined, and the length of any particular breakline as well. All of these measurements will serve in determining the position of any structures in the lake, and how best to make presentation of lures or bait.

Five foot contour lines are mentioned. Just what does this mean?

You will note that a line is drawn all around the lake and is marked five (5) feet. This means that this line follows a path around the lake that is actually five feet deep. If you get inside this line, toward shore, the depth of the water would be shallower. If you stepped outside this line, toward the center of the lake, the water would be deeper than five (5) feet. If you were ten feet tall and wanted to walk around this lake with just the top of your head sticking out, you would have to follow the path of the line marked ten (10) feet. If you did **not** take this path, your head would be either sticking out of the water or you would go out of sight!

Many maps will not be marked with the footage shown on the lines. Instead, the map will show only at the bottom, or over in one corner, that the lines are five foot contour lines. In this case, you must carefully **count** off the lines to a certain section to determine just how deep this section might be.

With the information given as to contour depth, you can now determine the water depths of this particular section and the deepest water in the area noted. A picture of the area now begins to emerge.

At the section marked "B" — This is a shallow, flat sloping bottom; the depth does not drop off very fast. Contrast this with the section marked "E" where the bottom falls off fast, sharply creating deep water very close to shore.

The section marked "C" is not a bar, but a washed out gully.

The section marked "G" (right hand, bottom) is a deep cave, or bay, with steep banks.

The section at "D" is a nice bar, or ridgelike structure, that runs out for some distance into the lake, toward deep water. This bar runs rather constant until it reaches the fifteen (15) foot depth, then it rapidly drops off to twenty (20) feet on the end and on both sides. You will note that on the right side of this bar (facing it) is a short "finger" on the twenty (20) foot contour line that extends out toward the twenty-five (25) foot contour line of the thirty-eight (38) foot hole. Keep this particular spot in mind, as later on we will call attention to this particular feature.

Structure "A" runs out nicely, but note the area just in front of the fifteen (15) foot depth. Here is a great big flat area that runs most of the way across the body of water. On the left side the five (5) foot contour has a slight "break" down to the ten (10) foot contour. Then farther out, on the ten (10) foot contour, another "break" occurs to the fifteen (15) foot contour. You could call these two 5 foot "breaks"

a breakline; but, in a situation such as this it is preferable to refer to them as a "break" since there is not a continuous break along the whole area, but only a sharp break at one particular place on the contour. If the break had extended for some distance, such as in section marked "D", it would be referred to as a breakline.

Out from the small "breaks" on the structure marked "A", the bottom flattens out until it reaches the twenty (20) foot contour, and this represents the deepest water in the entire left end of the lake. It is assumed that you have already observed that the section marked five (5) feet is not a deep hole, but a hump or underwater island. (On most maps the top of humps will be marked with the depth.)

Section "F" is another bar. It is a better structure than "A", because the twenty (20) foot depth water swings in fairly close and, subsequently, drops off into the thirty-eight (38) foot hole.

In studying a contour map remember that if the contour lines run far apart, this is more of a flat sloping area, where these lines swing in close, there is a sharp increase in depth. If the two lines come close together for quite a distance, this would be called a breakline. If the two lines come close to each other at a point or spot, you would refer to this spot as a "break". It is in these areas that you place emphasis when reading a map. These are the areas where fish will be found.

Each area should be studied carefully and the study should follow a pattern. First, find the deep holes or channels. Next, note any underwater islands. Then, search for bars or narrow running ridges that extend out toward the deep holes. Note if any large flat areas exist between the bars and deep water. Then, carefully study the contour lines to see where a "break" occurs, such as the "break" at "A" and on the finger at "D". In establishing this type of study pattern, all of the pertinent details will be determined.

We have now carefully studied the map and a good mental picture is in mind. The time has come to evaluate the information.

What does the map tell you?

If I were to evaluate the areas marked, it would be thus:

- (A) A nice looking structure, but not likely to get a good migration. The flat area directly off the end of the bar (between the fifteen (15) foot and the twenty (20) foot contour) would hinder any migration toward this particular structure. Fish must be able to see their route and destination.

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- (B) A big flat. There is no indication that any "breaks" exist in this area, it would be **passed up** as a fishing area.

- (C) This is more or less a flat area which has a slight depression caused by washing or erosion. There is no breakline anywhere in the area, so, again, this area would be eliminated.

- (D) This is the best structure in the area. It has a nice "break" on the end and sides, and in addition has a "finger" in the direction of the deepest water (home of the fish). This "finger" should be the first contact point of the fish!

- (E) Section "E" is a steep, deep area. This particular section could be important under certain conditions and during certain parts of the season (colder). But, during most of the season (warmer) this area would be passed by.

- (F) Structure "F" would be the second choice as a productive structure. The contour lines do not show any particular "break" that would give a clue as to its worth, but upon inspection certain "breaks" could exist that would make it a better structure than "D". "F" was given second choice from a study only of the contour map. Though no "breaks" show on the map, there is a good possibility that some exist. Thus it's always wise to **check the structures that show possibilities**. In so doing, you get the "big" picture.

- (G) Here again, this area may be of importance during short periods of the season (colder), but in the overall picture, this type of area would not be of great importance.

Any underwater hump, or island, is always important structure. Most of them have some access to deep water. In looking at the hump on the sketch, it could have possibilities. The fish could move up through the 20-25 foot section off point "D" and, in turn, arrive at the top of the hump. If the fish took this route, it would be entirely due to the small "breaks" found in the twenty (20) foot section. If this rather large, flatter area did not contain any "breaks", you would draw a blank on this hump. This could be determined by checking out the area.

In Section "D", reference was made to a short "finger" found on the twenty (20) foot contour line that extends out toward the twenty-five (25) foot contour line, and it was

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noted that special attention would be called to this particular feature.

Quite often, a structure will have not one "finger" but several, such as shown in Figure 74. Your job is to recognize which one of the fingers would best produce. The key to determining this is to find the one with the **sharpest break to deeper water!**

As fishermen, you should always be looking for the **contact point** on a breakline in the form of a "break," as illustrated. In studying contour maps, this is one of the prime features to look for.

As you can see, quite a bit of useful information can be determined by studying a contour map. But, in order to get this information, it is essential to learn exactly what contour lines mean. You must be able to **interpret** what you find, or it is of little value.

Every good fisherman has a map of the water he fishes. Some have the map on paper, some have it in their heads... but all have a map. If you are trying to fish your waters without buying or making yourself an accurate map, you are wasting a lot of valuable time. You could be wasting a whole season, you could even waste a lifetime of fishing!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The following figures and questions (76 thru 83) are not tests, nor quizzes. I am putting them in **FOR YOUR STUDY**. These cover only a part of the material studied, but they should indicate to you what parts should be reviewed. They could also indicate to you, if you need more expansion, and detail, on each section. Do not write and ask for answers. All the answers are in the book.

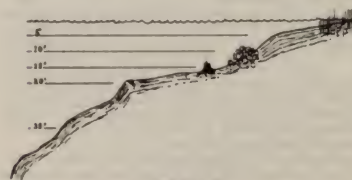


FIGURE 76

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Figure 76 is a side view of a structure. It is quite long. I have enlarged the "breaks" for your convenience.

- 1-At how many spots would you look for the fish?
- 2-Migration has not yet started. Where would you most likely find the fish?
- 3-Where would you most likely find the fish:
 - a-1st day after a cold front? 3rd day?
 - b-Temperature rises — starting to haze up and a few high cirrus clouds observed?
 - c-Where on — a fair migration? A good migration? Excellent migration?
- 4-Where would the scatter point be?
- 5-If you hit a lot of small fish along the weedline — where and what would you do?
- 6-Would the color of the water make any difference in your answers?



FIGURE 77

Figure 77 is a side view of a reservoir. It is quite large in area. Before this lake filled (wet weather reservoir), it was bulldozed all over to even out, or smooth, all bottoms. It has very clear water. Tall thick Moss covers all bottoms. The shallower water also contains tall weeds.

- 1-How would you fish it?

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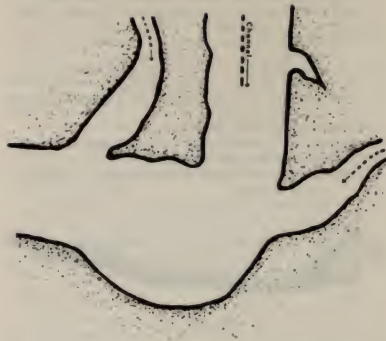


FIGURE 78

Figure 78 is a section of a reservoir (top view) which has some 'delta' conditions. It is located in rather hilly country.

- 1-Finish drawing in all channels.
- 2-Draw in bottom structure likely to exist in all areas.
- 3-Mark "X" on the spots likely to be productive.

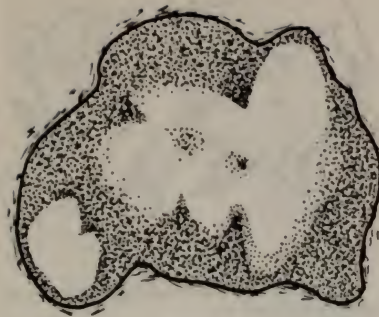


FIGURE 79

Figure 79 is a top view of a natural lake with lots of weeds. This lake contains two schools of fish.

- 1-Pin-point them after migration.
- 2-What is the water color likely to be?
 - a-If the weeds go to 7 feet? 15 feet?
- 3-This is a deep natural lake with very clear water. It has big bass and lunker northern. The time is 3 or 4 days after a cold front:
 - a-How is the best way to fish this lake?
 - b-What type fish are likely to be caught in large numbers?

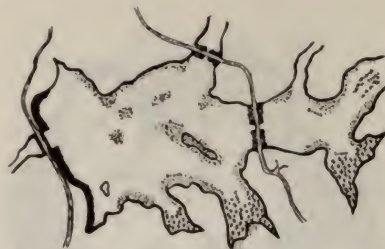


FIGURE 80

Figure 80 is a top view of Flatland reservoir. The area at the dam is over a mile wide.

- 1-Draw in the channels.
- 2-Where is the boat dock likely to be found?
- 3-When would you fish in the standing trees?
- 4-If the wind was coming out of the northwest, where would you fish?
- 5-If any clean bottom exists, where would it be found?
- 6-In working shorelines with the bottom covered with bushes, how would you work the lures on the troll?
- 7-In what areas of the lake should the edges of the channel be worked?
- 8-Indicate the best spots, and how would you work them?
- 9-Where are you likely to find the best water color?
- 10-Give 4 reasons why the dam areas, such as this, are good areas to fish.

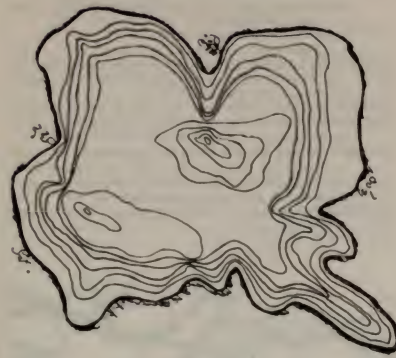


FIGURE 81

Figure 81 is a top view of a large natural lake. The scale is $\frac{1}{8}$ inch equals 400 feet.

- 1-How many migration routes are possible?
- 2-How many 'Home' areas are there?
- 3-In any home area, is there one particular structure you think fish would use above all others?
- 4-Which is the best structure in the lake?
- 5-Would any structure be difficult to find, if you did not have a depth sounder? How would you find it?
- 6-Would fish appear to come up on the side of any bar?
- 7-Which structure would casting be better than trolling? Why?
- 8-Can you see evidence of an ideal bar, which would contain no fish?

- 9-What would the color of the water be if the weeds went to 8 feet?
- 10-If this lake was located in an area that had frequent cold fronts, which would you consider fishing it for — bass or walleyes—?
 - a-If the weedline went to 17 feet?
 - b-How would you fish it?
- 11-If the water was clear, and there was a restriction of "no boats". Would it be easy to fish? If so, what structure would you work?
- 12-You cannot motor troll, how would you go about finding the best spots, without a contour map or a depth sounder?
- 13-If you had no restrictions on presentation, is there any particular structure you would concentrate on if you were fishing the 2nd or 3rd day after a cold front?
- 14-Draw a side view of all good structures.
- 15-Would you consider this a good lake? Why? Under what conditions?

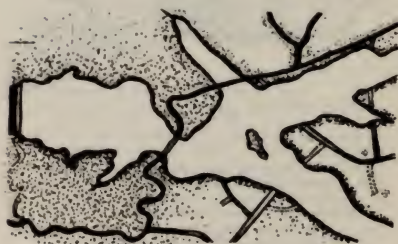


FIGURE 82

Figure 82 is a top view of a reservoir, such as found on a ROAD MAP. I have enlarged the roads for convenience of 'seeing'. They can tell you lots about the fishing potential of a lake.

- 1-Where are steep deep shorelines likely to exist?
- 2-If there are any underwater humps, in what section should they be located?
- 3-Where is the best water color likely to be found in the late summer?
- 4-List the visible structure to be worked.
- 5-What indication do you have about the region where the dam is built?
- 6-Where are you likely to find former farming lands?
- 7-Where would you start, or where would you launch your boat if you had a choice?
- 8-This is an old lake, the bottoms are clean and hard, would you pick this lake over one where the bottoms are covered with brush?
- 9-How would you go about 'finding' the fish in this type lake?
- 10-You are fishing this lake in early spring, you are working a steep shoreline. The predominate fish in the lake is smallmouth. You are moving along casting in *toward* the steep shore. You are using a light spincast reel, your lure is a small jig. In full detail, describe the cast and the complete retrieve.

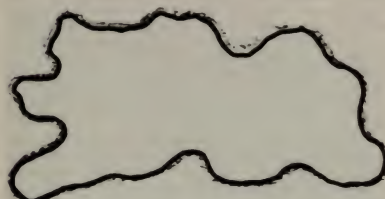


FIGURE 83

Figure 83 is a top view of a natural lake. When you arrive at the water, your interpretations tell you that if fish are caught on this particular day, they will have to be caught in a period of about 14 minutes, at one particular spot.

- 1-What is the color of the water?
- 2-Are the weeds tall or short?

- 3-What weather conditions exist?
- 4-What method of lure presentation is used, casting or trolling?
- 5-What type, or types, of lures would you consider best?
- 6-Draw a detail of the **spot** and locate its approximate depth.

Earlier I stated, that a GOOD Spoonplugger could walk up to a lake, observe the features, ask a few questions, and come up with some answers, BEFORE he gets on the water. If you have been able to answer all "Food for Thought" (Figures 76 thru 83) to complete satisfaction, you are well on your way to becoming a good fisherman. This part, however, should show, you still have a long way to go, and that you can always get better in your interpretations.

Let me give you an example of what I mean by interpretation.

Recently, my wife and I were in Florida on business. While there, I had time to run by and fish a lake I had in some way missed. It was a very large lake, being several miles in diameter. I knew that it was a shallow lake, and when I got there I was informed that the deepest water was 9 to 10 feet in depth. I noted that the water far quite a distance from shore was covered with weeds and lily pads.

After asking a few questions, I told my wife that we would have to find a "break" or a spot that broke from 7 to 9 feet if we wanted to catch some fish. We found three such spots and each was working with big bass. We had a ball. To make it more satisfying we had the whole thing by ourselves, although there were lots of other boats and fishermen on the lake.

Probably you are wondering how I figured we had to find that particular spot. In the first place, I heard the man say 9 - 10 feet was the deepest water in the lake. The second thing he said was fishing hadn't been so good the last week or so. In the third place I had quickly noted all those other fishermen on the lake working the daylight out of the weeds and pads. I figured this had been going on for the last week or so which clearly indicated **the fish were not in the weeds or pads**. I noted also the weeds and pads cut off at 5 - 6 feet, and since the **bottom was flat with no "breaks" or structure beyond the weedline, the fish HAD to be in the deepest water**. I picked the 7 - 9 foot section as the weather conditions told me the fish **would not move very far**. This type of break would be large enough for me to see, and if there happened to be

a deeper break it would be so close by I'd have no difficulty finding it.

It was easy pickings. (The spots are so far out in the lake I suppose the only ones who will ever pass over them will be the water skiers.)

During the preparation of this section, I have wondered what I could include that would "stick in your craw" and make you realize the importance of mapping and interpretation. **But of more importance**, would drive home the fact that the knowledge found in this book, is absolutely necessary, if you desire to become a good fisherman.

I have picked out one particular statement I have made — **MOST of the time MOST of the water contains no fish**.

In order for you to better understand the factors that contribute to **most of the water not being productive**, let's take a lake, and eliminate all the water that does not contain enough fish to warrant any time or effort. When viewing the amount of water in a lake or reservoir, you should view it from all directions. Not just the surface area, but all the water below. In other words, length, width and depth — all the water.



FIGURE 1

Figure 1 is an aerial view of a well known lake in the midwest. I might add that the last time I heard, this lake was scheduled to be "reworked". Due to the "bitching" of the unknowledgable fishermen, about the lousy fishing, the

"State" is going to pull it down, poison out, and restock. If this is done, most Spoonpluggers will pass it up as a fishing hole in this generation. If EVERYTHING goes perfectly right, it may someday have the amount of lunker fish it has today — **but I doubt it.** Too bad, the lake isn't stocked each year with small fish, and the fishermen taught how to catch them — **after they grow up.** I have often wondered which would be better for the "State" — drain, poison out, and restock; or educate the fishermen? I am sure the educational route would be cheaper, faster, and especially **more lasting.** For in just a few years the fishermen are "on their backs" again.

You will note the lake is quite large. I do not know how many acres or miles of shoreline it contains, but whatever it is, there's quite a lot of water down there. The maximum depth is around 35 ft. The weedline cuts off at approximately 5 ft. (Good water color). Outside the weedline some bottoms are clean, while others are dirty. The predominant large game fish in the lake are Largemouth Bass, and Northern Pike.

Take a close look at Figure 1, and try to figure out where the good structure might be. Where would you start, or do your fishing? How would you go about fishing this lake?

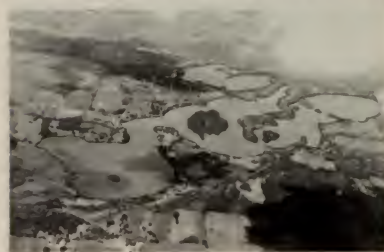


FIGURE 2

Figure 2 is the same view of this lake, but here, I have marked the areas that contain the fish. ("A" and "B").

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Although big bass and northerns can be caught in either area, if you wanted to go after big bass in quantity, you would work section "A". If you wanted lunker northerns, you would concentrate in section "B".

Look at figure 2, wouldn't you say the amount of water to be fished has been reduced?

Hold on, we're not thru yet. We gotta reduce the water that contains fish still further.



FIGURE 3
(Section "A")

Figure 3 is a top view of section "A". The solid line represents the breaklines in this section where the fish will be found.

The overall size of this section isn't too big, and the areas that will produce fish are still smaller. You will note that the fish do not come to all parts of the breakline. Neither do they use all the "fingers" or projections.

Wait just a minute, we got a couple more steps to take.

First, the fish will not be on these spots all the time. They do not move or migrate constantly or consistently. On a normal fishing day, you can't expect the fish to move to these areas more than one or two times — and for only a short period. Second, weather conditions in the area may be such, that days may pass before any quantity of fish move toward the spots.

Note very carefully all the depths — the breaklines, and the sections below. Study these depths, and see if you

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can figure out why the fish are caught on these particular spots (also in Figure 4).

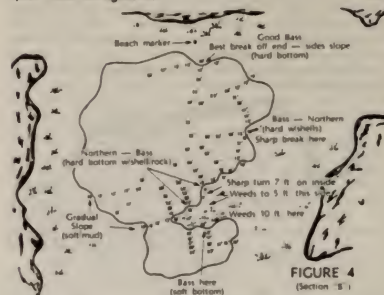


FIGURE 4
(Section "B")

Figure 4 is a top view of the larger section "B". Here again, not all the parts of the section produces. If you were to take the areas where fish can be caught in quality and quantity, and overlay them on the total lake (Figure 1) they would most likely appear as small dots.

By this time you should begin to see what I mean when I say, MOST of the time MOST of the water contains no fish. You should also begin to realize why you can't fish blindly, or haphazardly, and expect to "stumble" upon a fish. You should see if you do not understand the instincts and habits of the fish, and what part "structure" plays, MOST of the time, you will be fishing where they AIN'T.

Your reaction to the above might be, "He isn't talking about my fishing water, he is talking about one isolated instance in the Midwest."

You want to bet I'm not talking about your fishing hole? This particular lake is rather a small body of water, when compared with most important fishing lakes and reservoirs. I would go further, and say, if you compared the productive areas for lunker fish in this lake, to the overall size, percentage wise, it has more productive water than your lake! Furthermore, this particular lake was easy to work out. I can't say the same thing about your lake.

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All through the book, I have tried to impress upon you that the **deepest water in the area, was the home of the fish.** Here, I have tried to hammer home the fact, that **most of the water contains no fish.** Both are such basic fundamental fishing facts, that unless you grasp both of them fully, you will never be a successful fisherman! I'm not using the word "never" carelessly, I mean just that. The word is NEVER.

It is only **after** you accept and fully understand these two basic principles of fish behavior that you will be able to go about solving the problems of the waters you fish. Do they apply to your lake? You can bet your life, they apply to **ALL** lakes.

.....
Mapping is the key to interpretation —
Interpretation is the key to knowledge —
Knowledge is the key to success —
Success is the key to satisfaction
.....

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PRESENTATION OF SPOONPLUGS

Many fishermen gain a degree of proficiency after many years of experience, and begin to feel the urge to create a lure of his own design. Subconsciously, he is looking for a lure that will perform magic, and secretly he thinks his brainchild will do just that. The proverbial path will then be beaten to his door, and the clamor of fellow fishermen for his product will give him untold riches.

I once heard a well known writer make the statement, "Boy, if I could design the perfect lure, I could retire tomorrow." He, too, harbored the desire to have a lure that when thrown in the water — no matter where — would cause the fish to rush with a frenzy to gobble it up.

Many years ago I had the desire to design a lure, but my reasons differed from those of my writing friend in that I had no thought of monetary value. Neither did I, for a minute, think that a lure could be designed that would catch fish without effort on the part of the fisherman. My reason for thinking of a new lure design was for the purpose of having a lure for my own **personal use** that would allow me to have some control over my fishing. The lures available could offer little more than action to a limited degree, and in a variety of colors.

I was considered a rather successful fisherman using the lures that were available, but I fished hard and for long hours to get my catches. Observations made, had convinced me that if a lure could be designed that would allow control of speed and depth — **at the same time** — then this, combined with color, action and size could make my desire for consistent catches a reality.

With this objective in mind, I turned to my tin snips, and from sheets of metal began the task of trying to create a lure that could be **trolled or cast**. It had to maintain depth, whatever speed, while free running or bottom bumping. Actions had to be built in that would vary according to the need of the speed being used; and so balanced that it would come to the top of the water when fouled. Most important of all, it had to WALK and TALK regardless of speed or bottom conditions (mapping, etc.).

I soon found that I had set for myself no small task. If I got speed, I lost depth; if I got depth, the action was gone, and so on and on.

After arriving at a model that proved satisfactory, I began making some for my own use. Later, friends were given samples, and when my friends became too numerous to

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supply, the idea of making lures to sell was born.

I am glad my desire to create a new lure was not born from the idea of getting rich. This dream would have been totally destroyed. Today, I am sure of one thing, if I had built the lure to sell I certainly wouldn't have made it look like it does. Many fishermen and writers refer to it as a shoe horn that has been stepped on by a horse.

I have never had the heart to tell my writer friend that his dream is "all wet". Dreams are to be fostered — not shattered. He will pass many happy hours contemplating his dream of fame and riches, never realizing the sad truth that fishing habits follow generation after generation in the same manner, and are not easily displaced, and that you can show a fisherman how to catch a bushel basket of fish, and he will only shake his head and say, "I don't believe it" — **and he helped catch the fish.**

The remark is often made that most other lure manufacturers come out with something new each year, so why haven't Spoonplugs been changed or updated, or replaced with some new design. Originally, Spoonplugs, as stated, were not designed to be sold. They were built for many reasons, the main one being that no such lures were available that allowed control of depth or speed to any great degree. There was a need for a lure that could do a specific job in casting and trolling, one which could be used in mapping to determine what the bottom of the lake looked like, and how it was made up. A lure that would allow fishing knowledge to be transferred to others. You can tell a fisherman how to fish properly, but without the tools to allow implementation, this knowledge is of little value.

Over the years the present lures have done their work superbly. There has never been any doubts that the original designs were correct, nor have I felt the design could be improved, or that another lure would do a more thorough job. Spoonplugs will catch anything that swims. But above all, they are teaching and disciplinary tools which enable catches to be made, which are the important things a lure must do.

That's why I ask the question, "Why should I change or build new lures? What would be the purpose? Gimmick sales? Every tackle box has more than it needs of these. Change, for sake of change? This doesn't always make a better product. I could design a dozen new lures a day — and they'd all catch fish — but so what? All Spoonplugging items, such as lures, rods, lines, etc., were designed especially for SPOONPLUGGING. They had to be, none existed. Every item was made to do a specific job — not to appeal to the

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fisherman.

If there are any who are critical of these specific tools, then so be it. It is unfortunate that a study of fishing must, at times, be associated with the sale of fishing tackle. But I feel that proper explanation as to how this has come about is quite sufficient. My rewards have been largely from those who write to say, "Thanks to you, my fishing has taken on a new meaning". Or from being able to help the many who write and wish so fervently to catch fish for a change. All I can say to the critic is, let the results speak for themselves.

I teach fishing. If proper equipment is used, I care not what the brand name might be.

After a quarter of a century, I have my doubts if you have ever heard of Spoonplugs. I further doubt if your local dealer has any in stock. I have no salesmen. I do no advertising, nor do I call on any dealers or jobbers. I attend no sport shows to display my "creations". My policy is, "take 'em, or leave 'em". It doesn't matter one iota to me. But, if you desire to try them, Buck's Baits, P.O. Box 66, Hickory, N.C. 28601, will be happy to serve you.

In this section on the Presentation of Spoonplugs we are going to see WHERE, WHEN, WHAT, WHY and HOW — "tools" should be used.

I can go to great lengths to explain what makes a fish tick, but in the final analysis your ability to become "expert" will require practice and experience. **By utilizing the BASIC procedures for the Presentation of Spoonplugs**, you will present lures correctly. And from the very beginning start catching fish in quantity and size, or both, as never dreamed of before. This gives the incentive to gain further knowledge and really become good at the game.

In some sections of this book necessity dictates repetition. It is not possible, in a study as comprehensive as fishing, for you to remember all the basic points. And since some of these points are **applicable in many areas**, many will be repeated for clarity and for the purpose of tying together all information as closely as possible.

These basic approaches to casting and trolling structures have been proven to work without a shadow of a doubt, and with tremendously satisfying results. But above all, these Basics are the MEANS by which YOU LEARN the important things for your FISHING KNOWLEDGE AND GROWTH.

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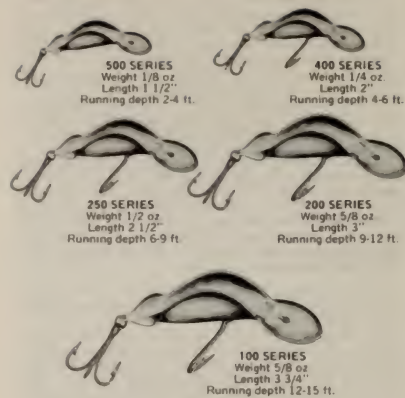


FIGURE 84

Figure 84 shows perspective sizes, series numbers, weights, length, and running depth, of the first 5 sizes of the standard free-running, bottom bumping Spoonplugs. The number system may confuse you for a spell, but just keep in mind that you control depth by the size lure. That is, the smaller the lure the shallower it runs. The larger the lure, the deeper it runs. The 700 and 800 series (not shown) are larger lures. The 700 series is 4 inches long, and its trolling depth is 15-20 feet. The 800 series is 5 inches, running depth 20-25 feet.

The length of line being used in trolling will affect the

depth at which lures run. For instance, if 60 to 80 feet of line is first let out additional line will allow the lure to run deeper.

Let's set up some categories of line length:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 - Short line | 10 - 20 yards |
| 2 - Medium line | 30 - 40 yards |
| 3 - Long line | 50 - 80 yards |

When trolling shallow water, a shorter line length is normally desirable over a long line; depth control can be accomplished better with lure size rather than line length. When deeper sections are fished with the larger lures a long line is necessary, and in order.

Spoonplugs were designed with a limited depth range, this was desired so the lures would not vary their depth too much with a change in line length. This design allows the smaller, shallow working lures to hold their depth range with a **minimum of line length**; and the larger sizes, which call for a longer line length, would have their depth range limited to a **controllable line length**. In other words, the lures were designed to get their maximum depth range on a minimum of line length; additional line not adding any appreciable depth to the lures.

Spoonplug sizes and their running depth as per recommended line length is as follows:

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 500 Series | 2 to 4 feet | Short to medium line length |
| 400 Series | 4 to 6 feet | Short to medium line length |
| 250 Series | 6 to 9 feet | Short to medium line length |
| 200 Series | 9 to 12 feet | Medium to long |
| 100 Series | 12 to 15 feet | Medium to long |
| 700-800 Series | 15 to 25 feet | Medium to extra long |

It should again be noted that the diameter of the line will affect lure depth. The larger diameter will give a greater line drag which results in a depth loss. The above figures on depth were based on the smaller diameter lines (.019 - .021 inch).

The medium line length (30 - 40 yards) is a good length to run on Spoonplugs. This length will give good control and depth. Before the 100 Series lure is removed, extra, or long line should be used to get the maximum depth of this lure. Any water shallower than this will have already been "strained" by the other lures on a medium line length.

Normal trolling will not scare fish. They may be more "skittish" in the early part of the season with its colder water, but as weather warms and water temperatures rise, the passing of a boat is sometimes an aid. Different line lengths would take care of these conditions if they should

appear — longer lines in the early season, less as it warms.

In this light, let me emphasize the shorter line length in hot weather. During hot weather, many times the troller does not run through the lure sizes with a short enough line. This is especially true when working for smallmouth bass. At times the line should be no more than 5 to 10 yards behind the boat; in or beside the "bail" of the motor. A good rule to follow under hot weather conditions is to go through the lure sizes with a short line before using the recommended medium lengths. In areas where shad are plentiful, the correct line length under these hot conditions, could be the distance the shad are observed breaking in the wake of the motor.

I would suggest at this point you go back to "Presentation of Lures" and "Tools," and review what I said concerning trolling lines — "how to control lines," "how to sit in the boat," etc.



FIGURE 85

Figure 85 is a cross section view showing where different size Spoonplugs are used in fishing the various sections, or depths, of water.

ZONE A (shallows). You will note that the 500, 400, and 250 Series are used to test the shallows. The larger lures, are used when testing the deeper water area (Zone B). This does not mean the larger lures will not be used in the shallows. When casting the different types of shoreline waters, the size lure necessary to maintain Depth control must be used. Again, often the fish will be found when trolling a small lure. This does not mean you have to go back and cast with the same lure size. Pick out one big, or heavy enough to do a good

job. But when trolling, you can visualize Figure 85 as being the areas in which to troll the different sizes.

Many fishermen consider the Spoonplug unique due to the fact it will maintain its depth regardless of speed **on the troll**. Most are amazed at how it will go down and walk bottom, even over rough bottom conditions. They are flabbergasted at its ability to attract a strike when other lures fail.

Some consider its greatest asset is its performance **on the cast**. It will allow the speeds necessary to cover all ranges. It comes to the surface in a hurry when fouled, but when it comes to speed and depth control, on the cast to deep water, there is no substitute. **There is no other lure which will give bottom control as well.** To a great many, the control on the cast over-shadows the control on the troll — including myself.

After hard use the Spoonplug may need minor adjustments to keep it down or to make it run true at any speed. If the lure runs **to the right**, place a pointed object, such as a knife blade, beside the metal loop where the ring is attached. Bend this loop **very slightly to the left**. Do the opposite if the lure tends to run to the left. Do not kill the action by using too large a snap or snap swivel. A No. 2 snap is best. If you "have" to have a swivel, use no larger than a No. 10. Most of the time a swivel is just excess baggage. Retie the snap after a hard pull, and periodically check your line for nicks or frayed spots.

Some basic rules for handling rods in casting and trolling would include:

- 1 - Do not point rod toward the line (line of retrieve).
- 2 - Let the lure work against the rod tip.
- 3 - Keep the rod tip **low** most of the time.
- 4 - Palm the reel. Do not hold it in a "pistol" grip.

To get into the subject of presentation, we will proceed as if you and I are on a fishing trip to a lake neither of us has fished before. **On this trip I want to set up a procedure for you to follow on every fishing trip on every lake.** There must be no doubts in your mind about the things you are going to do, or the way you are going to do them. The purpose is to find out everything about this water, as soon as possible, and as successfully as possible. **This trip is to set the pattern for THE BASIC PRESENTATION of lures, both casting and trolling.**

Depth is the one thing that we must **CONTROL** by some means. The only effective way I know to do this is by letting

lures do it. We will use the different size Spoonplugs. This is the tool that is going to enable us to fish from the shallowest water to as deep as we can go; and somewhere — in the shallow water — in the deep water — or somewhere in between, we are going to find the fish. If we don't find them on the first try — we'll try again.

In working out a lake to determine where the fish are, I like to begin by trolling with a motor. As stated before, trolling has many advantages. It allows a greater portion of water to be covered, and the water can be checked faster. It allows for a greater speed variance, and in many instances, will locate and catch fish where it would be impossible to do it by any other means.

Since most casting outfits are no good for trolling, we will use a short, stiff rod, rigged with a line that is not only heavy and stiff, but it is metered so we know how much line we have out at all times. With a rig such as this we will be aware of what is going on at the other end of your line. We will use a NO-BO trolling line, a T-45 trolling rod and a 101 Spoonplugger reel.

If you have lures and gear that will do the job, that's fine, you won't have to use mine.

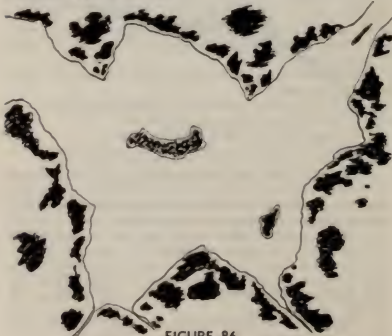


FIGURE 86

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Figure 86 is a top view of the lake we have decided to fish. What should we do first? How do we start? How do we use the lures?

When fishing a strange lake there is one thing I try to find out before leaving the dock. That is, where are the "hot" spots located? Knowing this will greatly expedite our work. The dock owner tells us the northern end is where a lot of fish are caught from time to time. This is good news to us, for we know that somewhere in this area is potentially good water. We will waste no time in getting to that end of the lake.

In looking at the north shoreline (Figure 86), it appears to be about a mile long. We were not told where on this north end to fish, or where the fish were caught. Therefore every lure we use for testing the shallows will be kept on until the TOTAL length of this north end has been covered.



FIGURE 87

The first Spoonplug we will use will be the small, 500 series. Figure 87 shows the path and position of this first lure size (as well as the other two series we will use in checking the shallows).

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We will let out 60 to 90 feet of line. This can be judged accurately because we are using metered, No-Bo line which has different color markings every 30 feet. We just let out 2 or 3 colors. The 500 series Spoonplug has a depth range of two to four feet. The shorter line length will give the minimum depth, and the longer length maximum depth. We could run longer line lengths, but normally, the short to medium lengths will be sufficient during our trolling of all lures in the shallow zone.

When you first see this smallest Spoonplug, your reaction might be, "What are we fishing for — minnows?" Although this Spoonplug is small, it does a man-sized job in working the depth of water for which it was designed. It does catch a lot of smaller fish, but when the large fish are in the zone — it catches them also. Too many fishermen will not run this 'deadliest' of lures. In lots of areas and types of waters, this lure used on the troll, is all that is needed to obtain consistent catches.

We will start our troll with enough speed to give the lure some action — a tight wiggle. At intervals we will increase the speed. Before the lure is let back, take a gander at it to see if it is running correctly. The 30 to 40 yards will not be so far, that you can't feel every little wiggle. At intervals, a slight pull with the rod, will enhance the "feel". If the "feel" is just a steady pull, with no wiggle, the lure has become fouled. Normally all it takes to get it cleared, and running again, is a quick jerk with the rod. Some types of grasses and weeds, will require several quick hard jerks to clear. Too many fishermen spend half their time reeling in, to pick some small debris from the lure. When working areas with lots of weeds, the rod is used to RIP the lures through the weeds, if you come too close.

This rod action, to keep lures clean and running correctly, will be utilized on ALL sizes of lures, in ALL depths of water. I might add, though, it is oftentimes hard to clear a deep running lure with rod action. In this case, hold a steady pull, and as soon as the lure comes to the top, then apply the rod action — quick hard jerks. As soon as the Spoonplug is clean, down she goes, and she stays there until fouled again — regardless of speed.

In determining the Speed factor, remember the hard rule is according to temperature. The colder it is, the slower the speed. The hotter it is the faster it is. I never have any trouble getting fishermen to go slow enough. It's the fast speeds that give trouble. When working shallows in warm water, the correct speed TO START WITH, is about the

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time you begin to think the fish can't catch it. Then increase it.

Whatever speed is being used at the time, **when the lure hits bottom, reduce speed** so the lure will walk — not plow. Then **when it comes off running free again, increase throttle**. This means, you are changing the throttle rather constantly when working the shallow water. In deeper water, when working bottom, the throttle is used less often, but even here, the best speed must be found.

The worst mistake the troller makes is not keeping his lures in position. Each size lure **MUST** run in its proper place. What is the proper place? The bottom will be the guide. If the lure runs 4 feet deep — try to keep it in water 4 feet deep. If it runs 8 feet deep on the troll, keep it in water 8 feet deep, etc.

This north shore, as well as other lakes, will have sections where the bottom slopes off gradually with a lot of shallow water, while other sections will have steep banks where the bottom drops off rapidly with deep water close to shore. Our trolling must be done so as to keep each size lure in its proper position, even though the bottom contour may be changing constantly.

In the section where the bottom slopes off gradually, we want to get our 500 lure as close to shore as possible, so it will be bumping bottom at times. If this area contains bushes, or has standing trees, we will get our lures back among them, if at all possible.

In the section which has the steep banks, and the bottom drops off rapidly, we will run this lure "Jam-Up" against the bank, or skipping along the rocks, or whatever the bottom might be. In some waters the shallows contain weeds. When this occurs we will get the lures as close to the weeds as possible, and maneuver the boat so we are **not continually fouled**. If we are continually fouled, either we are not following the contour of the weedline, or we are in too close. However, if we are never fouled, we are possibly too far away. As stated, the lure can be cleaned by a quick jerk of the stiff rod and hard line. This cannot be done if a limber rod and stretchy line is used.

After the entire length of the shoreline has been covered with the 500 series, and no strikes resulted, we now change to the next size lure. It is important to use the different sizes in sequence, as they will allow the water to be "strained" thoroughly, leaving no section or control unchecked.

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The next size lure we will use will be the 400 series. This runs at a depth of 4 to 6 feet. We will fish this lure along the **SAME shoreline**. It would be rather foolish to check another shoreline with another depth. Again, we must keep this lure in its proper position as stated before; this is done by maneuvering the boat. To maneuver the boat, we first move in toward shore until the lure starts bumping bottom. (When working in some lakes the lure will come in contact with weeds instead of bottom.) When this happens, **slowly** head the boat towards deeper water. Then, as the lure starts running free, slowly head back toward shore until the lure starts bumping again. By continually moving the boat in this manner, the lures will always be in position and the contours of the bottom will be followed, regardless of shape.

The degree of correction of the boat is so slight, that the lure is never more than a few degrees from directly behind the boat. What would happen if you moved your boat until the lure started bumping, and you continued to let it bump without ever turning toward deeper water? If you did this, you could come into a large flat area; and find yourself going out across the flat getting farther and farther away from fishable water.

Now let's suppose you slowly maneuver the boat away from the shallows and the lure starts running free. If you did not begin to correct your heading, and slowly start back toward the shallows, you could find yourself out over 50 feet of water, and the lure would be completely out of position.

It is not necessary to bump bottom at all times with the first few sizes of Spoonplugs. When fish are in the shallows they will take a free swimming lure. It is necessary, though, to hit something once in awhile, be it weeds or bottom, to assure yourself your lures are in position and not out over deep water. This way your lure is free running at times and bumping at times. But, you also must bump the bottom to make the fish take. At times they may refuse a free running lure, but strike a bottom bumping lure savagely. I am usually surprised when a bass takes a free-swimming lure.

In teaching trolling, one of the main problems is that the fisherman **OVER-CONTROLS**. He does not correct **SLOWLY**, but hastily moves the boat putting it completely out of position. When the lure makes contact or comes off running free, the boat is so far out of position that a lot of water has been missed. It takes time to get the lure back behind the boat again. If you use a depth sounder in the shallows — which you shouldn't — the boat will be out of position most

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of the time, as well as your lures.

When maneuvering the boat in trolling, you have four things to accomplish: First, keep lures in position; Second, keep lures fishing at all times; Third, learn your waters — know the bottom contours and find the breaks, structure, etc.; Fourth, arrive at the fish. The above procedure will accomplish this.

After checking speeds and varying line lengths (10 yards — 1 color) with the 400 series, and still no strikes, we will go to the 250 series. The 250 will run from 6 to 9 feet. We will fish this size like we did the others. It will be kept in position by maneuvering the boat as previously explained. Its position and path is also shown in Figure No. 87.

By the time we are into this third series you should begin to know something about the bottom make-up. By maneuvering the boat you should begin to see the shape of the area we are fishing.

If any fish are caught along this shoreline, on any of the three sizes, the immediate area would be checked thoroughly at that time by **casting** or **additional trolling** to determine if other fish are in the area. **Thoroughly** means depth, speeds, and colors. If weeds exist, and fish are caught along the weedline, it could mean fish are back in the weeds, and the weeds should be checked.

If you stop and cast any area in the shallows with Spoonplugs, **be sure your retrieve is FAST and STEADY**. This holds true when using or casting Spoonplugs in any free-swimming way. If you think the fish are sick or something, then use a lure that you have to retrieve slow. Don't pike around in the shallows with Spoonplugs. If you use them you must work them fast and steady — that's the only way.

Let us say we have covered the whole north shore (Figure 87), with three sizes of Spoonplugs and we haven't caught a single fish. What next?

First, let's look at what we've accomplished. From the "catching" standpoint it might seem like a wasted effort. This is not true. In trolling the three sizes, three things were accomplished:

- 1 - We have eliminated all of the shallow water in the area. We caught no fish so we must assume the fish are not in the shallows at this time. Now we have only the "in-between" water and the "deep" water left.
- 2 - We have found the types of structure in the area and the bottom conditions. Normally, the contour of

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of the shore itself would indicate if any structure exists. But now our lures have given us the whole picture.

- 3 - We have established the only migration route in the area — a long underwater bar. So now instead of fishing a mile or more of shoreline, we have come down to a narrow structure, or path, leading to deep water.

At this point we make a definite change in our lure presentation. From now on our main purpose is **to work bottom**. This is done by keeping the lures walking or bumping right on bottom. The fish will ignore a free-swimming lure — just watch it swim by. But, a bumping lure will cause every fish in the school to out-do each other trying to get at it. All of the controls become insignificant here in comparison to the walking or bumping of the lure on structure.



FIGURE 88

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Figure 88 shows the point of land and the underwater bar upon which we will now concentrate our efforts. It also shows the series of Spoonplugs we will use.

We now go to the 200 series. We will walk or bump this lure on the structure we have found. In order to cover all the contours on this structure, we will make trolling passes in several directions across it. On each pass, as soon as the lure runs free, we will immediately turn the boat around and make another pass so the lure will be back on bottom. This size lure will reach 11 to 12 feet.

We must make enough passes to feel reasonably sure that as much of the structure as possible has been reached with the 200.

If the 200 does not produce a strike, the next move is to the 100 series Spoonplug. Now we can work deeper on structure as this lure will go to 14 or 15 feet. The 100 will be used exactly as we used the 200. Trolling passes will be made in several directions, and the lure will bump bottom as far out as possible on the structure.

When working this structure by trolling, maximum line can, and should be used. On the final passes, as much as eighty to ninety yards might be needed to allow the lures to reach maximum depth. If a small diameter line is used (.019" or less), the depth range can be extended beyond the 14-15 feet.

As stated previously, we start running into difficulties at this depth in our controls. So now we have come to a point where we must assume the fish were caught, or not caught. If no fish were caught, it means the fish are deeper than we are fishing.

There are several possibilities open to us now: (1) - We can exercise patience for the fish to move up, or (2) - **Since we are rigged properly**, we can go to the 700 and 800 series, and go deeper to see if the fish can be located. These lures go deep, but handling them separate the men from the boys, and you would not try it if you were not rigged as we are. (3) - We can go to another section of the lake which shows, from looking at the shore, there might be other spots which could have good structure, and proceed to work out these areas by following exactly the same procedures. If we decide to move then we would return periodically to this known area and re-check it to determine if any movement has occurred. **On a normal fishing day we would repeat our trolling procedures many times to check and re-check both the shallows and the deep structures.**

If we decide to exercise patience and to stay with this

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structure until the fish move, our efforts would be concentrated as deep as we could effectively reach. This could, in most instances, be done more efficiently by casting.

Let's take the brighter side of the picture. Let's say we picked up a nice fish with the 100 or 200 series on our first trolling passes. It was caught in deep water, and this normally means a school. We want to immediately position our boat for casting.

At the time of the strike we quickly noted the position of the boat with reference to the shore. This is important, because the fish are "schooled," the area they cover is not too large, and we must get our lures back to the same spot. Sometimes this is a little difficult to do unless an additional pass or two is made, or a marker thrown to serve as a guide.

You might ask, "why stop and cast? Why not continue trolling?" There are several reasons why the casting position should be taken when fish are located on a troll. You can more easily control speed (and depth) on the cast, and when handling the fish. You HAVE to keep these fish in a so-called frenzy or competitive spirit. You can't allow them to quiet down. It's sort of like throwing a grain of corn to a bunch of hungry chickens. You also have a TIME period in which to make the catch. The time lost in making the trolling run, the handling of the fish, etc. would eat up most of the available time. In other words, you got little time to make a catch. Furthermore, the fish are already "spooky" by being this shallow, and repeated trolling runs over this shallow area, could send them into deep water.



FIGURE 89

Figure 89 shows the position we will assume for casting to a school of fish. We want to anchor the boat just as shallow as possible, but yet near enough to allow the casts to reach immediately beyond the fish. If we anchor over water too deep, difficulty will be encountered in keeping the lure on bottom for its walk through the school of fish. The

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steep angle of the retrieve will pull the lure off bottom and you'll lose depth control.

Many fishermen have trouble determining the size lure to use on the cast. At times they may find the fish while trolling a small lure. They stop to cast and they become flustered when they find they can't control the small lure. IT IS NOT NECESSARY, pick out a larger Spoonplug that you can control. The fish couldn't care less. But, to be more specific, in this case (Figure 89), the position the boat is anchored, will determine the best size lure to cast. THE SIZE WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE DEPTH OF THE WATER UNDER THE BOAT. If you are anchored in DEEP water, it will require a LARGER lure to maintain depth and speed control, than when anchored in shallower water.

If you are anchored in water less than 4 to 5 feet, you may get good performance from a 250 series. If you are anchored in water 6 to 8 feet in depth, you will have to go to the 200 or 100 series to maintain a good walk along the bottom. At times when working extra deep on the cast — 30 to 40 feet — you may have to go to the 700 or 800 to maintain depth control.

Anytime you anchor in water 12 to 15 feet, or better, you begin to run into trouble maintaining good depth and speed control with a free-running bottom bumping lure. You will then have to switch to a jump-type lure such as a jig, worm, spoon, etc. You will sacrifice speed control, but you can retain depth control, and of the two, depth is the more important.

In casting a Spoonplug toward deep water, you make the cast slightly beyond the spot you are trying to work (a school of fish, hump, breakline, etc.) and let it sink to the bottom. Watch the line, when it becomes slack, the lure is on the bottom. When letting the lure sink, keep a slight tension on the line. Do not feed a lot of loose line, this will allow the lure to tumble as it sinks, and the lure could foul with the line. This would be true of any lure with multiple hooks — one of the reasons a single hook lure works better on spinning gear, where the snap cast produces a lot of lure tumble and excess line.

As soon as the lure reaches bottom, take a few turns of the reel handle to sink and remove the excess line in the water. This gets you directly to the lure. With the rod tip low, and pointed toward the side (not toward line of retrieve) a few fast turns of the handles will get the lure up on its nose "walking". Regulate your retrieve speed to maintain a steady walk. If the lure leaves the bottom for any reason,

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stop the retrieve and let it go back before continuing the retrieve. If it doesn't walk, you are either anchored too deep, or trying to use too small a lure. While casting to a school of fish there are a few do's and don'ts. When a strike occurs, and after the hook is set, you should get the fish from the school as quickly as possible. You certainly don't want him floundering around where he might spook the others. You don't want to play around with him at all, during any stage of game. The other fish in the school have a tendency to follow the hooked fish, and should they see the boat, the school is prematurely lost. They will drop back into the deep hole since depth is their only escape. This is one of the reasons why I recommend the heavy casting gear. Light gear will catch only a fraction of the fish, that can be had with heavier tackle.

The fish we have found are schooled and they could be large. We want to do everything possible to keep from losing any of them. Too often, if the biggest fish of the school is hooked and lost, or if too many are lost, the school will spook. When we get into one of these groups don't be surprised if you seem to be all thumbs and start shaking like a leaf. Just play it cool, and keep 'em coming.

Today's school may be four pounders, but it could be close to six pounders tomorrow. But no fisherman has really lived until he has a school of these big beauties where each successive cast puts one on the stringer. A stringer full of these is truly a memorable experience.

Finding migration routes, and where and how the fish use them, is not accomplished without time, effort, and patience. It will be difficult at first, but as experience is gained and additional knowledge is had, this becomes just a routine part of fishing. Finding these routes, however, is well worth the time and effort expended. Once they are found you can take your grandchildren there and catch fish. Once these home areas and migration routes are established they will remain there until the water level, or bottom changes, force the fish to look elsewhere.



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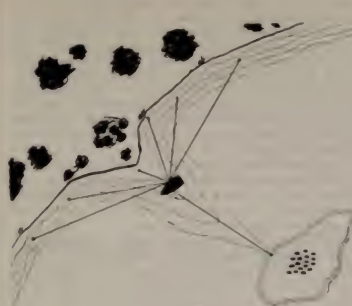


FIGURE 90

After a lake has been worked out and the productive areas known, then it could be checked out fairly well, by casting alone (with no pre-trolling). Figure 90 shows the boat position for doing this on a bar, such as we just worked.

By anchoring the boat rather close to shore, long casts can be made along the shoreline. In this way, the lure is fishing the shoreline for the entire length of the retrieve. If the shallows do not produce, long casts can be made on the deeper migration route. But remember — this deeper section is the area for bottom fishing, and your lure must sink to bottom at all times. To work further out on the migration route, move the boat progressively further out so your casts will come as near to the drop-off as possible. By casting all sections in this manner, you can determine if any fish are on the move.

It might be a good idea to repeat — Fish do not move constantly or consistently. You might make contact with the fish on the first cast today, but tomorrow you go out at the same time and sit for three or four hours before you get a movement. This is normal. I like to get there ahead of the movement. It means the good fishing is ahead of me and not behind me. At another time you may have to spend three or four days before they show on your favorite spot.

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The fishing trip we have just completed was for the purpose of establishing the basic way that you should go about your fishing. In this instance we used Spoonplugs, and were working a particular shoreline; but, regardless of what lures you use, or what type of water you fish, you must have procedures that will enable you to work the water quickly and thoroughly. The procedure as outlined, and with Spoonplugs, is the best way I know to check out any water to eventually arrive at the fish. I found I had to have these "Tools" many, many years ago. I believe you will find they are still needed today.

If you go to strange waters, or big waters, where do you start? What do you use? How do you fish it? If you use Spoonplugs, and go to work as outlined, it won't take long to find what, where, why, when and how. Then, catch them anyway you like, using any gear you desire.

Remember on all the structure types — bars, humps, breaklines, weedlines, Delta, etc., and in all the fishing situations — rivers, sloughs, deep lakes, shallow lakes, brush and muck bottoms, etc., the Spoonplugs have their place. They eliminate no lure in your tackle box. They just make all the others more valuable. Spoonplugs were designed for depth and speed control — nothing else. I can't say the same thing about most lures on the market.

YOU MIGHT SAY:

When fishermen are first introduced to Spoonplugging, and the presentation of Spoonplugs, most are exposed to trolling for the first time. Most do not know why it is important, nor what it is all about or how to go about it. Most have associated trolling with "dragging" a lure through the water with the boat and motor.

I recall when fishing with Dad years ago, we would be casting every little nook and corner in the shoreline. We'd see a fisherman trying to troll (actually he wasn't, he was in 100 feet of water, pulling a lure that ran at 5 feet.) Dad would look at him and comment, "Look at that lazy rascal, he's too lazy to cast".

Years later, when we would observe a good troller, he would say, "Look at that guy trolling. You know, he's a pretty smart fellow".

When fishermen are learning to troll, two questions normally are asked. 1 - What do you do, or how do you handle that boat when the lure gets hung on a snag? 2 - What do you do, or how do you handle the boat and motor when you hang a fish?

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In answering these two questions, I am going to say a lot, and in detail. If you are wondering why I am doing this, it is for the simple reason, I want you to learn how to troll. Too often fishermen will not learn how to troll due to the very things you have asked. There are more reasons, but just loss of lures alone will scare many off. It has always amused me, that a fisherman raises a big squawk if he loses a Spoonplug. He belly-aches to me for telling him to fish the bottom or other places where he might lose lures. But, you never hear a peep out of him when he goes hunting and shoots a pocket full of shells. He will fire at something, even if it's a tree.

Trolling is not only a skill, but it becomes a great pleasure when done correctly.

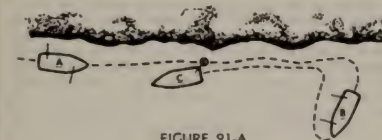


FIGURE 91-A

Figure 91-A shows two trollers proceeding down a shoreline (Position A). The motorman fishing inside (next to shore) gets his lure hung on something. He realizes that he has a secure snag because of the immediate action which he took at the moment he became aware of (or felt) the impending hang. His first reaction was to immediately apply pressure to the rod. The purpose of this action was to rip the lure through the hang, or off of the hang. Since this did not work, he vigorously worked the rod back and forth in an attempt to throw back loose line so as to allow the lure to drop free.

Many times when the reel is trolled in the anti-reverse position, it is hard to throw back sufficient loose line to free the lure. If the reel is on light drag, you can pull forward enough with the rod to get additional line off the reel and then rapidly throw the rod tip backwards. This method of getting loose line is preferable to that of releasing the anti-reverse, because if the anti-reverse is released with tension on the line a bad backlash can result. If you are one of those that troll with the reel on free spool (with the anti-

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reverse disengaged), and "thumb" the reel, loose line can be obtained immediately and thrown backward in an attempt to free the hung lure.

All of the initial efforts involved in trying to free the lure takes place in a few seconds. If these efforts fail, there is no doubt about the severity of the hang.

The moment that the hang is determined, the motorman should quickly cut the throttle, and turn the boat toward deep water. This will kill the forward motion of the boat. As the boat comes perpendicular to the shoreline the motor is thrown into neutral gear.

As the turn of the boat is made, BOTH fishermen swing their rods over, and swivels his body so as to face the hung lure — Position B. **The person not hung, IMMEDIATELY winds in his lure as fast as he can.**

When he's ready to go back to the hung lure, the motorman turns (swivels) the boat and proceeds back ALONG THE PREVIOUS PATH OF THE BOAT. While going back toward the hung lure, he keeps TENSION on his line. The speed going back, is determined by how fast he can take up the line. If he over-runs the line, he can add to his troubles. If he is not sufficiently skilled to run the boat and wind in line at the same time, he should hand the rod to his partner.

It is important that the boat proceed back along the path of the taut line. If the line gets wound around any brush or debris when proceeding back, the lure will be difficult or impossible to free. By proceeding back along the path of the line the additional problem of a wrapped line can be avoided. The taut line also serves as a guide for the motorman.

When the boat reaches the position of the lure (Position C) it should proceed slightly beyond, and then with vigorous rod action an attempt is made to jerk the lure free. At this point, a steady pull normally will not free the lure, unless it happens to be under an object such as a rock. But for a hang on debris or brush, heavy rod action (jerks) will be needed, and even this may fail to free the lure.

If all of the above fails, then there is another tactic that can be quite effective, and that is "shooting" the lure loose.

This in no manner requires the use of a real "shootin' arm", but merely makes use of the line to do the shooting. This is done by taking the line loosely in the left hand and then using the right hand to apply a great deal of pressure on the line, as if shooting a bow and arrow. When the pressure of the right hand is released, the line is "shot" toward the lure with considerable force. If the line is merely plunked, such as plunking a banjo string, no effective force will reach the

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hung lure. **The loose line must be shot to the lure to be of value.** The best position to apply this action is DIRECTLY ABOVE the lure.

If several attempts to shoot the lure loose has failed and the water is shallow enough, try to reach the lure with the tip of the rod. Stick the rod down in the water as far as possible, taking up the line with the reel. If the lure can be reached with the rod tip, the lure can be pushed free from the hang.

If all of these attempts fail, then a plug-knocker can be used if one is available. Most commercial plug knockers have a ring, or some device, that allows the knocker to slide down the line. They also have a line attached for working the knocker and for pulling the lure loose.

Most of the time you will be faced with a lure that is hung but no plug-knocker in the tackle box. It is wise to save a few old spark plugs for such an emergency. A rather effective plug-knocker can be made by using an old plug. The line can be placed between the points of the plug, and a slight tap on the top point will close the gap. The spark plug can then be worked down the line with a little rod action (small jerks). This can be a great tool for releasing hung lures.

If no spark plug is available, a heavy sinker with a snap or snap swivel attached, can be used in much the same manner.

Earlier, the point was made how the boat should proceed back to the hung lure. The question might arise as how to determine if the boat has reached the hung lure, or if it's only to where the line is wrapped around a limb or some protruding object. This can be determined by grabbing the line, beyond the rod tip, and applying heavy pressure to the line. Be careful to note if the line is "stretchy", and try to feel any "sawing" action on the line. If it is stretchy, or you feel a slight "sawing", then the boat has not reached the point of the hung lure, you are only to where the line is wrapped around something. You must now get the line free before the lure can be recovered.

First, try to determine in what direction the line is wrapped. Then back the boat off 8 to 10 feet, all the while keeping steady pressure on the line. Circle the obstruction in the opposite direction of the "wrap". If the line does not come free after the circle is made, go around it in the other direction, and again keep plenty of tension on the line.

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FIGURE 91-B

Now let us assume that the fisherman in the front of the boat is fishing on the inside (next to shore) as the trolling pass is made. The boat is traveling down the shoreline in the opposite direction — Figure 91-B, position A. The motorman, who is fishing on the outside, on this pass, gets hung again.

The forward motion of the boat is killed as described above, and the boat immediately swings to a perpendicular position in respect to the shoreline (Position B). As the boat turns, the fisherman in the front of the boat raises his rod tip and swings his line over the head of the hung partner in the back of the boat, and IMMEDIATELY retrieves his lure. His lure will now approach the boat on the opposite side of his partner's snagged line. He merely leans forward and lifts the retrieved lure across the motorman's line.

Now, let's assume the fisherman in the front of the boat, and who is on the inside, gets hung. The boat is immediately swung out and its forward motion killed. The fisherman whose lure is hung lifts his rod tip high, swivels his position and passes his line over the head of his partner in the stern (motorman). The motorman is now in the position to retrieve his lure quickly and without any complications.

In all cases, whether the fisherman in the front or the one in the back gets hung, both of them bring their rod tips up, and swivels his position so he is facing toward the hung lure. You should not be concerned if the lines cross over each other. The fisherman that is not snagged can immediately retrieve his lure with ease.



FIGURE 91-C

Figure 91-C is a similar situation with two fishermen shown trolling a shoreline. In this instance, the fisherman on the inside hangs a fish.

The "drag" should never be so tight that the line could break if there is a hang, or if a fish strikes. The short interval of time that occurs between a strike and getting the forward motion of the boat killed can, at times, exert enough pressure to tear a lightly hooked fish loose.

My own personal policy is not to use anti-reverse, or the star drag, when trolling with small lures, as the smaller lures are normally equipped with small hooks. I prefer to use thumb tension, as this allows me to release line while the forward motion of the boat is being stopped. I use just enough tension on the line to assure control of the fish and to hold the hooks firm. The only time I use anti-reverse is when trolling the larger lures which have bigger hooks and heavier pull.

When the strike is made, the same procedures are followed as in the case of a lure hang; the motor throttle is closed, and the boat swiftly turned to position B, with both fishermen facing toward the hung fish.

The only change in procedures now is in the maneuvering of the boat from Position B. When the boat is swung out perpendicular to the shoreline the throttle should be thrown to the absolute minimum, or the motor thrown into neutral. **THE MOTOR SHOULD NOT BE KILLED.**

By leaving the motor running, you are in a position to maneuver the boat if it becomes necessary. Normally, the

forward motion will carry the boat into deeper water and away from any shoreline obstructions that may exist, but in many instances the boat will have to be maneuvered farther out into deeper water, especially if there is an adverse wind blowing or if heavy weeds or brush is present.

There is rarely an occasion in which I feel it necessary to kill the motor. I have it either barely ticking over, still in gear, or I throw it into neutral. There are very few times that I find that I do not have to use the motor to further position the boat so as to be on the safe side when fighting a fish. If I have to swing further out into the lake as in Position C, Figure 61-C, I swing slightly back toward the fish as indicated. Very often, I find it necessary to go quite far out and a good distance back toward the fish, in order to pull the fish free of weeds and brush.

Not killing the motor when a fish is hung is a good habit to get into. Whether fishing the shoreline or some underwater island in the center of the lake, there should never be any more or any less power on the motor than necessary to keep the boat in a desired position. There are times when a strong power will be needed, either forward or backward, to maintain a desired position such as in a strong wind or strong current. Whatever the situation, a running motor enables it to be handled quickly and easily.

Invariably, when talking about procedures such as above, the question is asked, "What do I do when the fish jumps?"

Unless you are one of those who had rather see the fish jump than put him on the stringer, there are several things that you might try. The first effort made is to **try to keep the fish from jumping.** This is not always possible and there is no sure-fire method that will prevent the jump. At times, quickly putting heavy pressure on the fish when he is observed rising to jump will work. At times, I have found a complete reduction of pressure stopped the jump. Sometimes, if the fish is close to the boat, jamming the rod tip down into the water as far as you can reach with a downward pull, seems to work.

The best procedure that I have found, after all attempts to stop the jump has failed, is to **PRAY** he is solidly hooked. Because, all of the fine points of retrieving your lure and maneuvering the boat on a strike is for naught — if the rascal gets away.

YOU MIGHT SAY;

"I can use Spoonplugs to outline a structure, and I can

tell fairly well the depths by using the different sizes. Where I run into trouble is that I am never quite sure I know where the "breakline" or the "drop-off" is. For instance, I can make a long trolling pass with the larger sizes toward a structure. I start this pass from quite a distance out in deep water, and sometimes the pass is made at an angle, at other times straight in on the bar or structure. I can note where the lure makes contact, but can I be sure this is the breakline? Could I not be hitting 'up on the structure' rather than at the breakline?"

Yes, you certainly could be hitting up on the structure itself, rather than at the breakline or drop-off. Here would be one of those times where a depth sounder could serve as an aid. However, previous interpretation and knowledge of the lake could give a partial answer. What does the study of other sections tell you? Do you have structure that normally breaks into deep water by the time you use the larger lures? Just how deep do other structures run before they drop into the hole or channel? Just how deep is the channel? How far out? Relate these things.

A simple check as to whether the lure is hitting 'up on structure' or whether it is hitting the "breakline" is to **reverse** your trolling run. By reversing your trolling pass, you are utilizing your tool to a greater degree so that it can tell you as much as possible about the structure. On your reverse pass the lure would make contact with the bottom on a shallow section of the structure. The lure would begin to walk DOWN the structure, as the boat direction would be toward deep water. As long as the lure keeps walking it keeps going down. The tip is digging into the bottom, greatly increasing the downward pull. If you feel the walking becoming lighter, decrease speed to a minimum (never below a 'walking' speed, and never just a drag) and drop back more line. If you keep the lure walking, it keeps going down the structure, much deeper than previously. The thing that pulls a lure UP is the line pressure. You are pulling UP while the lure is pulling DOWN. If you increase the size and pulling power of the lure, you get greater depth.

When handling lures in this manner, any breakline or drop-off will be noted quickly. If there occurs a short breakline anywhere on structure the lure will tell you by running "free" for a short spell. If the lure suddenly stopped walking and continued to run free, you have passed a greater breakline or the drop-off. Relate these positions to your previous trolling passes.

In most waters the larger lures used on a 'reverse pass',

will reach the breakline or drop-off. In some water, bars will extend below the depths you can reach in this manner, and the drop-off or breakline cannot be reached. This would normally be the case where a steeper deep-section of the lake is being fished, and you maybe shouldn't be there in the first place. It would depend upon how well you did your "home work" before you went fishing.

YOU MIGHT SAY;

"I do not have a Depth Sounder. I am trolling Spoonplugs to locate a "bar" (or structure) that runs quite far out into the lake. I have established the shape and how it changes depth, etc., but I do not know the exact depths on the structure. However, I do know that a certain lure size will reach just so far, and beyond this point, I have to use a bigger deeper running lure. I have used all of my lure sizes and have a pretty good idea what the structure is like. Since I have no depth sounder and the structure is quite large, is there any way for me to establish the approximate depths without taking a lot of time to measure each structure?"

Let your lures do the job. Each size will run at a given depth with a given amount of line being used on the troll. Go back to Figure 84 and restudy the Spoonplug sizes, and their running depths.

To verify these depths, make a trolling pass with a noted length of line. Get the particular size Spoonplug just skipping the bottom. Go back and measure the depth. After a few tests you will know fairly accurately what depth they all run, or, more correctly, at what depth they all come in contact with the bottom.

YOU MIGHT SAY;

"I fish primarily in a man made reservoir. The lake is quite large, containing about six hundred miles of shoreline. The reservoir near the dam is large, and most of the fishing is done in this area. When the lake was first built, it was quite easy to catch a limit of fish. In recent years, the water has become quite beautiful and you can see bottom in fifteen feet of water — but the catches of fish keep going down. Today, I am lucky to catch one fish — much less a limit. And, I figure I can use Spoonplugs pretty darn good. My question is, "what happened, and what can I do about it?"

First, you didn't ask one question, you asked two. The most important question of the two is the second one, "What can I do about it?" Before attempting to answer this question though, we need to take a look at "what happened." Three

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things should be considered when trying to arrive at the answer to this.

First, as the lake became older, fish began to eliminate large sections of the lake that were not suitable for their habitation. They began to adapt themselves to certain areas of the lake. The result being — large sections that once contained a great quantity of small fish no longer have them.

Second, since the reservoir was built the fish have increased in age and size. Small yearling fish have a tendency to run around in the shallows, but after they reach approximately three years of age, or have reached around two to two and one-half pounds, they are no longer "teenagers." They now have become compatible with the larger fish in the area, and spend more and more time in the deep water sanctuary.

Third, the water color is a determining factor in this case. The statement concerning "beautiful water" would indicate this reservoir is more for drinking purposes than for fishing. In this case, the clear water is producing extra deep sanctuaries, and the movements are not bringing the fish within reach.

Structures in the lower sections of large reservoirs, such as this, are oftentimes not too good. Some of the shoreline structures, at first glance, appear to be "good looking." A closer check will show that most have breaklines which are too shallow, they do not extend far enough toward the deep water, and the majority of them have a big flat between them and the channel (a "Delta" situation). The big problem presents itself at this point — **the breaklines at the channel are too deep to work effectively.**

There are two routes you can take, in trying to solve the problems. First, you can spend more time in studying the extra deep breaks and breaklines. Then spend a good bit of time in learning how to present your lures on these structures. This particular route is work, and it will take time to completely work it out.

The second approach, and it is clearly the best and wisest one for you to make, is to leave this large clear area near the dam, and go toward the headwaters. You should continue toward the headwaters until workable structure and decent water color is found. Oftentimes, a long "cove" or arm on the reservoir will contain decent workable structure and a better water color.

As far as your ability to handle Spoonplugs, it appears you are working the wrong end of the rod. Instead of expecting a piece of metal to solve your problem, you should

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use your head a little

YOU MIGHT SAY;

"I fish a deep clear lake that is loaded with big northern and muskie. I can catch plenty of northern, and ever so often a legal size muskie, by trolling Spoonplugs fast along the tall weedline. But, I can't seem to catch the BIG northern, or many muskie. I practically draw a blank on any good size muskie. What am I doing wrong?"

I wouldn't say you are doing anything wrong. Stacking the lures along the weedline on a fast troll is the BEST way to catch the northern and muskie **that have moved up**. Your problem seems to be you didn't carry your Depth Control deep enough.

First, let me say more about the deep water sanctuary of the fish. The 30-35 foot depth is the normal depth that you view as the starting point of migrations for most fish. In your situation; the deep clear water, BIG northern and muskie, you have to increase the 30-35 foot depth down to 45-55 feet.

The myth that the muskie is an elusive fish, and that only the expert can catch him, can easily be dispelled by working the deep structure. Large lures 700-800 series Spoonplugs trolled along the deep breaklines, humps, etc., should solve any problems you might have with big northern and lots of muskie. The BIG muskie will be in this area, most of the time.

In order for you to reach these depths (45-55 feet) you will have to use a monel line (wire). Fifteen to seventeen pound test line should be adequate.

YOU MIGHT SAY;

"Boy! Have I got a lot to remember. Where, or how in the world do I start to become a good fisherman?"

YOU HAVE ALREADY STARTED BY READING THIS BOOK. Now go back and STUDY it.

Probably when you asked this question you had in mind **what you do first on the water**. You do just like I did, and as all good Spoonpluggers did. **YOU LEARN TO TROLL THE SHALLOWS.** You learn how to troll the first three sizes of Spoonplugs. By doing this, you immediately start to discipline yourself on Depth and Speed Control. You start your mapping and interpretations, what and where structure exists. The effects of weather and how it controls the movements of the fish. You will become aware of water color, and how it affects the lake conditions. You also start catching fish as never

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before. This coupled with what you have observed gets you started. I know of no other way to mesh all the gears, in a reasonable length of time.

You should spend time on every trip trolling the shallows with these three lures, AND, in as many different lakes as possible. If you don't keep them in position, as discussed, you will miss the whole point, and will be fishing just another lure — not a "teaching" tool.

You will know when the time comes to go deeper, or to the cost. But, don't be in a hurry. It may take several trips and several lakes before you are confident you are ready for the next step.

If you will do as I say, you will become as good as the best, before you realize it. BUT, if you are lure crazy or lure biased, or won't troll — forget everything I have said in the book.

I have traveled, and fished this country for a great many years. Very little water has been missed. Just this past year I traveled thousands of miles to work reservoirs that had been built since the last time I was in the areas.

In all this time, and in all this water, there was only a few times where I saw the fishermen catching enough fish. The very few times was in new reservoirs, where the water was working with yearling fish.

Whatever the situation, or wherever I found the fishermen catching fish pretty good, I moved on and came back at a later date (when they weren't catching fish). This didn't happen very often, for, as a whole, fishermen are a greedy bunch, and I could still "shake" them up, even though some fish were being caught.

In many many waters I made sensational catches, but I moved on without opening my mouth, or showing the fish to a single person.

Why did I leave the area, without saying a word, or showing the fish? It was due to the fact **THE FISHING WAS TOO DIFFICULT FOR THE AVERAGE FISHERMAN.** If I had told them I caught the fish on Spoonplugs, and they tried it and drew a blank, **I would do more harm than good.** I would lose this group entirely, and probably permanently. I had already lost thousands, primarily due to the fact, the fishermen **did not hear what I said.** All they were interested in was a shortcut to success, and they figured my lures was the answer. They soon found out they weren't — **although successful fishing was EASY in their case.**

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The predominate situations where the fishing was too difficult for the local fishermen was, the DEEP CLEAR LAKES AND RESERVOIRS. The situation was such, that the movements of the fish did not bring them within range of the average fisherman — spoonplugs or not.

In so many many cases, I had to go to wire line to catch the fish. It would have not only been unfair, but would have been a completely lost cause, had I done anything other than leave the area.

You should have noted at several places in this book, I have mentioned "Wire" lines. I did not dwell on this, because: 1 - Most fishermen do not have wire. 2 - It can be difficult to use. 3 - To be effective, it is very very important, that you know structure, can read deep water, weather, and know where the fish will be. You just can't go out there in deep water and wander around like some lost dog. Deep water means "exactness" in both interpretation and presentation.

Earlier, I stated I wouldn't be caught out fishing without a reel filled with wire line. I have found, if I have the wire, no lake or no species can give me trouble — for long.

When a monofilament (nylon) is used in trying to reach extra depths you are faced with larger lures, and extra long lines. You are still limited to around 25 feet. But with a monel wire line, you not only can run short lines, but you can run smaller lures to reach depths. When trying to reach the 25-50 foot depths, you can still reach them with the 200 and 100 series lures with a controllable line length.

There are three type lines that can be used to obtain extra depth on the troll. 1- Weighted (lead core); 2- Solid steel (monel); 3- Stranded steel wire. I personally prefer the wire over the weighted (lead core), although the weighted may spool better. However, either type will get the lures to deeper structure.

The solid wire has a greater diameter per pound test, than the stranded. I use both, with the solid wire around 20 lb. test, and the stranded from 20 to 30 lb. test. The smaller diameter on the stranded has more tendency to "get behind the spool" if care isn't taken, and more line may be called for than with the solid to reach a particular depth. Probably the stranded, in the long run, may be easier to handle for most fisherman. You can try all of them, and see which works better.

I use the wire on the same type trolling reel as I do the monofilament. One hundred (100) yards is sufficient in most all cases, but I still use "backing" to insure a fairly full spool.

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I use a monofilament leader (No-Bo) of 17-20 lb. test, between the wire and the lure. This leader is approximately 3-3½ feet long. I insert a small swivel between the wire and the leader. I use just a snap on the leader for attaching the lures. A number 10 snap-swivel can be used. Separate the snap from the swivel. The swivel is small enough to run thru the guides on the rod. The snap is strong enough to use on the leader. This leader is used for several reasons. It is a flexible joint between the heavy wire and the lure. It allows the lures to function better. It helps in control of proper line length (see below). It makes it easier when changing lures or handling a fish at the boat. Situations will exist when it becomes necessary to "break off" the lure. The leader will protect your line, and make it easier.

When properly rigged, the swivel should stop before it hits the reel. If you find when handling the rig, the swivel tends to butt or hit the level wind — shorten the leader.

In order for the wire to "spool" correctly, it is important that you use care in letting the line out. Let it out slowly — at all times "thumbing" the wire on the reel, so that the lure is pulling the line out under pressure. If you do not do this, the wire will loosen up on the spool, and you could be in trouble.

By letting the lure out in this manner, you accomplish two things. You keep your line straight, and you also control the amount of line let back. It is very important, when working wire, that you do not run excess line — just enough to get the lure down (bottom). If you run too much line, you lose control. Wire sinks, and if you run too much, the wire will hit the bottom (and "breaks") before the lure (a major reason I prefer the wire, over the "weighted" lines). This creates problems — loss of control, lure doesn't function properly, etc., etc. — and you hang up too much.

With a wire — any action on the part of the lure is clearly felt, and when it hangs, you receive a big jolt. There is no give or stretch, and you can lose a lot of lures. Being sure you run "just enough" line is very important. You may have to adjust the length, by winding in or letting out, but proper line length will normally correct any troubles you are having with wire.

At all times, check your wire for kinks. In most instances, when these occur, you can carefully remove the kink, without breaking the wire.

Proper use of wire will raise your score tremendously. Most of the time, if you are not catching fish, you are not fishing deep enough. As I have said before — you better go

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to the fish, as he may not come to you. BUT, DO NOT USE WIRE, UNLESS CALLED FOR.

Many lakes and reservoirs have holes and channels, with no visible structure. By no means go out there and wander around. It is much better to wait on shallower structure for the fish to appear. You do not use wire to go deep. You use wire to reach deep STRUCTURE. If it's not there, or if you don't know it's there (and where) — don't go.

A few years ago, I would not have advised fishermen to go to wire line on the troll. But, today, with the many Depth Meters available, the fisherman can "see" structure in deep water. He doesn't have to wander around in deep water "hoping" he might run across a deep breakline, hump, etc. BUT, the Depth Sounder can create problems in deep water. In the first place, most fishermen will not take the time to check maps, or ask, if structure exists in deep water. He will too often forget all about structure, and spend his time running around looking for suspended fish, and will waste the whole time, trying to catch some forage, rough, or small pan fish he might see on the Meter.

Too many times the fisherman is not knowledgeable enough to know what to look for, and most likely could not interpret what he saw, anyway. I am sure he wouldn't be observant enough to distinguish between those bodies of water that contain structure in deep water, and those that do not.

If you know what you are doing, wire line can be one of the more important items in your tackle box.



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You Too Can Be In Pictures Like This



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You Too Can Catch Fish Like This



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MENTAL ASPECTS

One of the primary obstacles that most fishermen face when they go fishing is the basic concern, "Am I going to catch fish?" Little thought is given to, "How they are going about it?"

If you think about it for a minute, you'll find this anxiety, this element of concern, or worry, or fear is directly related to a lack of "knowledge" — lack of confidence. We all find we are not compatible with the unknown. In the past you went to a lake, regardless of whether or not you had fished it before, and there was always that element of the unknown. Here is the water, now where are the fish? Where do I begin? There were no answers to the "Why" of it, hence a degree of emotion was present.

I would never attempt to say "catching fish" is unimportant! There may be good reasons for becoming concerned about catching fish. There may be an innate desire that is being frustrated, or it may be the desire to impress a friend, or a youngster, or your wife. You just gotta show her that all that expensive equipment is worthwhile. Whatever the reason, catching fish is important. It is anxiety of whether you will or won't that you must consider unimportant. This anxiety is what you must get rid of.

Any frustrations you have had in the past are unimportant. The important thing now is you have the knowledge. What are you going to do with it? Are you going to continue fishing in a haphazard way? Will you approach your fishing with new confidence, a new mental attitude? Will you have confidence that:

- 1 - You really know what makes a fish tick?
 - 2 - You know what you are looking for — regardless of the water being fished?
 - 3 - You know the characteristics of the structure?
 - 4 - You can evaluate weather and water conditions?
- What if you experience a lack of success on your first trip? What will be your reaction? What if you suddenly realize you don't know as much as you thought you did? What will your attitude be? When you run into problems ask yourself some questions:
- Have I approached my fishing in a haphazard way?
 - What has been accomplished during the time I spent on the water?
 - Do I know any more about this water than I did before I started?

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- Have I allowed enough time on the water to include a migration or movement of fish?
 - What is the purpose of the trolling pass I am making right now?
 - Do I have landmarks for this trolling pass?
 - How fast am I trolling? Have I checked speed control?
 - Should I use a marker?
 - Why did I make that cast? For what purpose?
 - What are the fine details of this bar I am casting? Am I reaching the break? The drop-off? Am I casting toward the shallows? Toward the deep water? Is my speed correct?
 - Do I know the contact point?
 - I have just caught a fish. Where exactly did I make the cast? What kind of a retrieve did I have? What kind of bottom? What kind of break? Can I go back to that spot and duplicate the same thing?
- It is of primary importance that you approach your fishing with, not only confidence and know-how, but with awareness. You will learn nothing if you just go through the motions of fishing, without observing the "why".

For example let's study a couple of fishermen in a boat. They are casting the shoreline. One of them turns around in the boat and makes a long cast toward the middle of the lake. He explains he has some loose line on his reel that he wants to remove. The lure sinks, and when he picks it up, to bring it in, he has a heavy strike. He consequently lands a nice fish. They, however, continue to cast the shore line, and throughout the day get quite a bang in recalling how that crazy fish was caught on that cast to deep water. They did not catch a single fish along the shoreline.

Let's take a look at two other fishermen under the same conditions. One of them makes a cast to deep water to straighten out his line. After he lands the fish he makes the comment, "now why did I catch that fish? We had better stop right here and find out some answers".

While checking the area, they note a bar running out from shore. The long cast had reached the edge of the channel. They also found additional casts to this spot produced additional fish. They marked the spot on their map and on later trips found the fish were not there all of the time, but every so often they'd take a limit from the spot. So, from then on, they checked it on each trip. If no fish were found, they'd go back to casting the shoreline.

The first fishermen gained nothing from catching the

fish in deep water. The second, gained a little knowledge that paid off during later trips.

The last two guys gained only a fraction of the knowledge that they should have gained from this experience. They should have gone further and tried to find out "Why" the fish were there once in awhile. They could have gained knowledge that would have solved the whole fishing picture for them. Not only in that lake, but in any lake they might fish.

You must be in the proper frame of mind, if you are to experience the things which will allow you to progress. You will not accomplish this if you approach SPOONPLUGGING with a lack of confidence. Concern yourself with 'what you are doing' — not 'how many fish you are catching'. Catching fish will take care of itself.

Before you are quite aware of it, your first season of SPOONPLUGGING will come to an end.

This is the time to reflect upon and review fishing results — or lack of results. Your review will show if this year's catches have been fair, good, bad, or just plain lousy. Did this year show a gain or a loss in results. How does it compare to past years?

You may not take a second look at your catches in the light of those of the past, and those desired for the future — other than in the light of daydreams. But you should! Only by arriving at a true picture of results can you analyze the problems so as to achieve the ultimate results and satisfaction in your fishing.

The ultimate in fishing results is to find a school of lunker fish, and with each cast produce a fish. This ultimate will not be achieved on each and every trip, but it should be the goal, and if your fishing is producing as it should, it will occur often enough to make each trip eagerly anticipated.

As you review your fishing and determine that something must be done, set a goal for the coming season. Then after the goal is set, there must come an analysis as to how it can be achieved. What did I do wrong this season? In what areas am I weak? What can I do to improve? When all of these areas are thoroughly understood and completely mastered, you can expect to achieve, not only ultimate results, but a new dimension is added, that of ultimate **satisfaction**.

What can be more satisfying than to be able to look at (observe) a fishing situation — be it old or new water — and through knowledge, interpret the conditions present and come up with a good estimate as to fishing possibilities. To

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know, with conditions present, if fishing should be relatively easy or hard, good or bad, and then take this interpretation and find a school of lunkers. There is no way for a fisherman to move ahead and experience the ultimate, that I know of, other than through knowledge coupled with experience. These results may not come once in a lifetime, if left to chance, they are made deliberately.

I have covered a great deal of material in this book. Much of this material will not be remembered, nor will it be fully understood until you experience it on the water. You will not experience all of the things you have studied on one or two fishing trips, nor on one particular body of water, nor at one particular period of the season. The things you observe, and the way you go about fishing will make your education a never-ending process. On each trip, you acquire more knowledge, and each trip provides a comparative analysis. When you compare these experiences with what you have learned (or now possess) from the book, then this becomes a permanent knowledge. Each fishing trip should provide you with hours of review and study of the material now in your possession.

In this book I have tried to include the things I thought were needed to make you a better fisherman. Much of the information given in this book is not generally known. I have left out things normally found in fishing books, and there are many things about fishing that could have been added. But, I believe all of the better things are included. **All of it could be expanded for additional knowledge.** This expansion is in my Correspondence Courses, and in my Formal Schools.

Just remember, all fishing FAILURES must be answered in terms of depth and speed control. All fishing SUCCESSES must be answered in terms of depth and speed control. The minute you credit your failures or successes to AIDS, you will be on the downhill grade. But above all, if lures, bait, or methods of presentation do not constantly act as a reminder of speed and depth, the some downhill road is ahead. **Future growth and fishing success will depend on just how much you keep these two controls in mind.**

Always remember depth control means WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY and HOW. Speed controls will make the fish take, and also tell you WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY and HOW. This puts all tackle items in their right perspective. You should know WHAT each will do, WHEN it is needed, WHERE it should be used, WHY it is needed, and HOW it is used.

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The day you become an "expert" is the day your fishing growth stops.

The day you become selfish in your fishing is the day you stop your fishing growth.

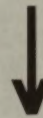
The day you forget depth and speed control, and put faith in size, color, and action (aids) is not only the day your fishing growth stops, but it is the day you start downhill. Pretty soon you'll be asking yourself, "what happened?"

To quote Don Nichols: "First of all, make up your mind that every word in this book is completely true. This will be difficult to realize at first because the book contradicts many things you have heard or read. You no doubt will accept some things in the book, but be skeptical of other statements. This is a natural reaction — but **don't do it.** The sooner you accept the things in this book as Gospel, the faster you'll become a good fisherman."

At this time, I am probably talking directly to you for the last time. Do not lose sight of your fellow Spoonpluggers. These fellows will provide, not only fishing pleasure, but will help in working out some of the problems encountered. Two Spoonpluggers in the same boat makes a good fishing team — for many reasons.

Many Spoonpluggers are kind enough to keep me informed of their progress. I am always happy to hear from you. My address is P.O. Box 66, Hickory, N.C. 28601. GOOD FISHING.

REMEMBER THESE



SEE NEXT PAGES

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TOM & "WHACKER" SAY . . .
"Old fishermen never die... they just move to Spoonplugville."



Tom Coleman and E.E. Davis wet a line at Spoonplugville.

A new concept in Christian Community living.

Located on the shores of Old Hickory Lake near Nashville, Tennessee. A town dedicated to the fisherman who wants to fish and live in peace, safety and fellowship. Free from the crowds, thieves, muggers, drunks and noise. A good place to raise a family. A place to spend your twilight years among people who care. Don't be put out to pasture and left to die. Come to Spoonplugville the "hub" of the finest fishing in America. Never too hot, never too cold.

Home of:

- The 700 family Tennessee Spoonplugging Club, the Fishermen's "Watch dogs".
- The Christian Youth Center, a second chance home for boys 14-17 years of age.
- Planned site for Buck Perry's Fishing Institute, the ultimate in fishing education, for the young, the old, the beginner, the advanced.
- Billy Pearson Cedar Creek Boat Dock, a modern day good Samaritan to the fisherman.
- Homes — Churches — Schools, etc. Just a good place to live.



Glenn Smith, a typical hard working member of the Tennessee Spoonplugging Club. Your assurance of Guidance and Fellowship.



Area of Spoonplugville, Tennessee on Old Hickory Lake, and planned site of Buck Perry's Fishing Institute.

* * * * *

For additional information write:

Mayor "Whacker" Davis, P.O. Box 444, Spoonplugville Community, Mt. Juliet, Tenn. 37122

- 8 - Which would be better in locating the fish along the weedlines, Casting or trolling?
- 9 - Why is the fisherman pointing to a particular place? Where should the boat be anchored for casting the total area of this "bar"?
- 10 - Weather and water conditions put the fish on the "drop-off", which would be better, casting or trolling for locating the fish?

YOU WILL NEVER BE A GOOD FISHERMAN IF YOU CAN'T.

WHAT THEY SAY

BOB WITT
Outdoor Editor, The Nashville Banner
"In my opinion Buck Perry is becoming to fishing what Bobby Jones is to golf—or Jack Dempsey to boxing—or Babe Ruth to baseball—or Red Grange to football."

TOM McNALLY
Chicago Tribune
"Disbelievers and scoffers to the contrary, there is no disputing the results of Spoonplugging for bass. It's pathetic that more people don't understand the Spoonplugging method."

GEORGE SANDS
Writer, Florida Wildlife
"After years of effort and sacrifice, Buck Perry is quietly proving to astonished anglers from Canada to Florida that he can catch fish whenever he wishes them to be "biting". You don't believe this? Neither did I. Since then, I've witnessed it firsthand and I still shake my head."

JIM HURLEY
New York Daily Mirror
"After two hours of Spoonplugging I was convinced that the Spoonplug was the greatest bass killer I'd ever seen. I had never taken fish with so little effort."

ANDY MORGENSEN
Outdoor Editor, Oakland Tribune
"I told Buck Perry to show me—and he did. Some may scoff at his theories, but you just can't beat success. The heltiest stringer of bass ever made me a believer."

JOHN B. GLEASON
Outdoor Writer
"I used to think I knew something about fishing—how wrong I was. If I had accepted the facts discovered by this fishing genius earlier in life I feel certain my fishing career would have been much more rewarding. We as fishermen should be eternally grateful for the knowledge he has passed along to us."

BUCK ASKS: CAN YOU ANSWER THESE BASIC FISHING QUESTIONS?



In this Lake:

- 1 - Where is the HOME of the funkier fish?
- 2 - Why have I not shown the water in this lake?
- 3 - What structure would you fish; In the Winter, Spring, Summer and fall.
- 4 - Where are the fish likely to be the day after a cold front?
- 5 - What would be the "contact" point of the fish to the island with the trees?
- 6 - If the water was extremely clear, where is the best spot shown?
- 7 - What season (winter, spring, summer, fall) would the underwater islands be best? Which season the Shorelines? (see inside cover)